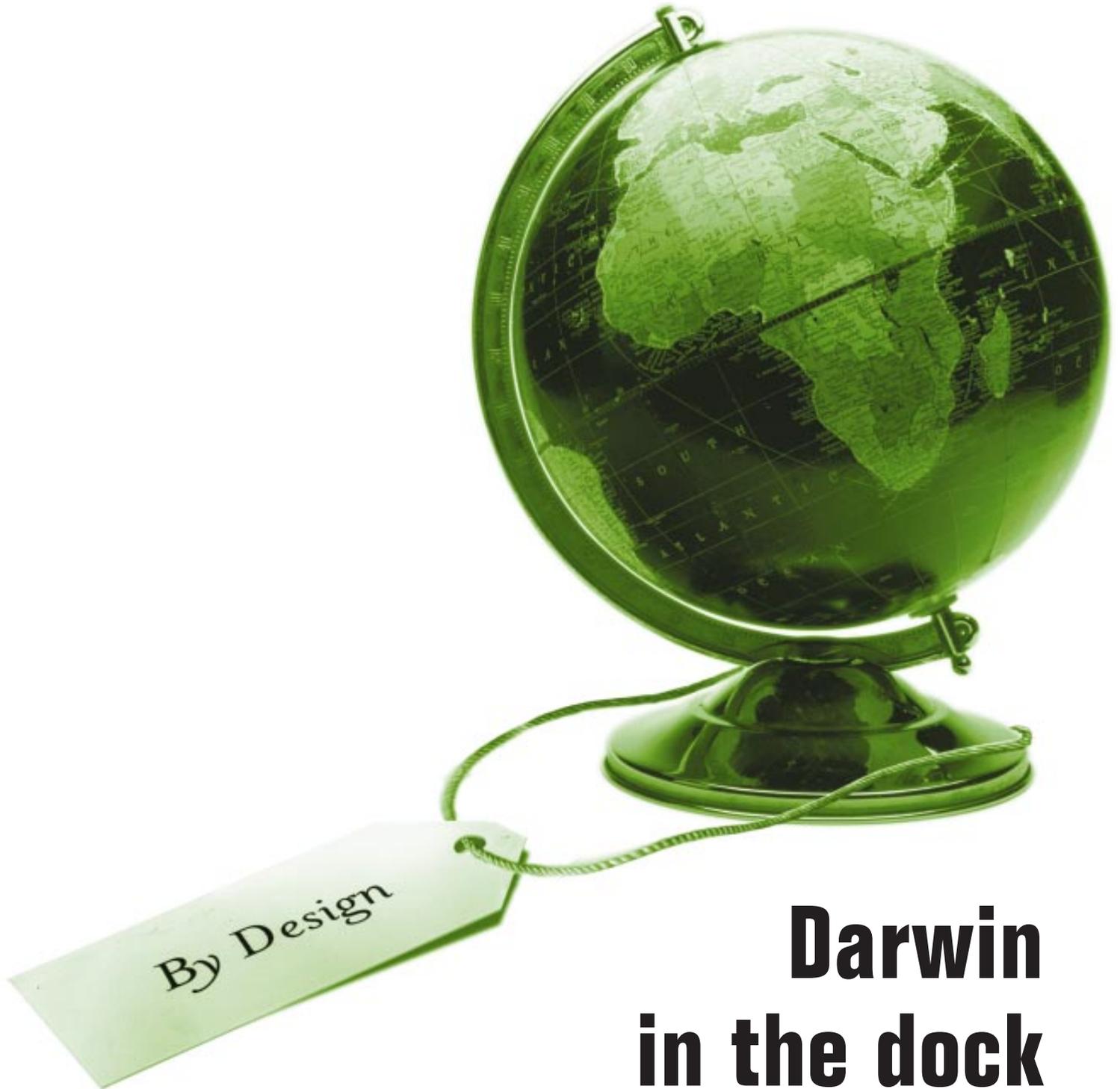


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editorial

Carl Sagan was one of the most celebrated scientists of the 20th century – a handsome and eloquent visionary who took modern naturalistic science into the lounge-rooms of the Western world. After his death in 1996, *Nature* magazine called him “a pivotal figure in the exploration of the solar system”. Stephen Jay Gould described him as “the greatest populariser of the 20th century”. His television series, *Cosmos*, which began in 1980, drew about half a billion viewers around the world.

Interestingly, Sagan rejected religion from an early age. He recalls of his bar-mitzvah at 13: “But in exactly that period when I was sort of seriously reading the Bible, I found all sorts of obvious contradictions with reality ... for example, two different, contradictory accounts of the origin of the world in Genesis. That propelled me away from religion.”

Sagan’s loss of faith sprang from his growing disillusionment with a supernatural explanation of the origin of life. As a young student at the University of Chicago, he sat spell-bound as he listened to the results of the Miller-Urey experiment in which it was claimed that life could be formed by natural impersonal chemical processes. Said Sagan, “I had the idea that in one fell swoop I could understand the origins of life, though I had not much training in chemistry and biology.” Who needed “souls” or the Spirit of God to explain humankind?

Sagan’s experience of rejecting God on the basis of naturalistic science is not an isolated one. As Australian microbiologist Michael Denton, said: “Darwinian theory broke man’s link with God” and “set him adrift in the cosmos without a purpose”. Indeed, Denton went on: “As far as Christianity was concerned, the advent of the theory of evolution ... was catastrophic. ... The decline in religious belief can probably be attributed more to the propagation and advocacy by the intellectual and scientific community of the Darwinian version of evolution than to any other single factor.” This makes it important for Christians to understand Darwin’s theory and to test its truth-claims.

A lot hangs on this case. That is why we should spare no effort in revisiting the evidence. Our exclusive interview with Professor Phillip E. Johnson is a first step in that direction.

Peter Hastie ^{AP}

Designer genes

Intelligent design proves it's not only natural.



Most of your professional life has been spent as a Professor of Law. Can you tell us something about it?

I grew up in the Chicago area and went to Harvard University for undergraduate work. Then I returned to study at the University of Chicago. After that I came to California and started out as law clerk to Chief Justice Roger Traynor in the California Supreme Court. And that's when I met professors here at Berkeley and was recruited for the faculty.

Then I went back east for a year to be law clerk for Chief Justice Earl Warren of the United States Supreme Court, which is sort of starting at the top of the American legal profession. But I didn't want to stay in Washington or New York; I liked the life out here on the west coast. So I came back and I've been here in California ever since.

As a professor of law at the University of California, Berkeley, I've had a special interest in criminal law and evidence and I've published a number of works in that area.



Phillip E. Johnson
talks to
Peter Hastie

Your book *Darwin On Trial* has won accolades. Renowned microbiologist Michael Denton called it the best critique he's ever read of evolution. How did a professor of law get involved in this subject?

Everybody, at first glance, regards it as odd that a law professor should take this subject on. People think that you have to be a biologist to deal with the subject authoritatively. In fact, there is very little biology involved in it. The amount of biology you have to know can be learned in a few days. It's nowhere near as difficult as what a barrister might have to master in order to cross-examine an expert witness in a field such as chemistry.

For instance, the same examples are used over and over again: the Miller-Urey experiment, peppered moths, fossil

horses, finch-beak variation, *Archaeopteryx*, and mammal-like reptiles. I could go on through about a dozen of these. In my books I've covered just about all the evidence that features in the popular literature about Darwinism. And it's the books for the general public that matter.

You need to remember that in the professional literature no one ever queries whether the theory is true or not. People just take it for granted when they deal with the details. So when this stuff gets to the general public, you find that all the relevant information is in the popular books.

In fact, the subject is really about logical reasoning. The question is: does the evidence show that natural selection has an enormous creative power when you hear that finch-beaks in an island population vary slightly in size from year to year? Does this information help us to understand how birds come into existence in the first place? My answer is, *No*. And if a biologist answers yes, it's not because

he knows more about finch-beaks; it's because he is using a different set of assumptions and reasoning criteria.

So, the debate about evolution is really a debate about logical reasoning, hidden assumptions and the like. And that's what a law professor like me is professionally qualified to deal with.

The other reason why this subject is of interest to lawyers is that if you look at the classics of evolutionary biology, from Darwin and Huxley in the beginning down to Stephen Jay Gould and Richard Dawkins today, they all – every single one of them – wrote books for the general public. And you will never find a statement in one of those books that says: “*You mustn't try to figure this out for yourself, it's too difficult, you need a PhD in biology*”. Instead they say, “*Once we've explained the basic theory to you, it's so obviously true that you must be highly prejudiced or plain ignorant if you don't believe it*”.

So, I like to say that I am the self-appointed representative of all those readers for whom these books were written. My job is to answer these authors by explaining to them why their case is logically flawed and unconvincing.

How did you first become interested in Darwinism and evolution?

Simply because it involves the most important subject of all in intellectual life: the creation story. You know, that's the thing that really got me interested. We're not talking here about a scientific theory that's only of interest to professional biologists. Darwinian evolution has become the creation myth of our culture.

Remember that every culture has a creation myth and a priesthood. This priesthood is the body of experts who are licensed to tell the creation story to the public. They're very jealous of their authority because it gives them enormous power.

I mean, scientific gurus like Stephen Jay Gould and Richard Dawkins have no real standing as research scientists. Nor do they have any special credentials as philosophers or public policy experts. But they give enormously influential opinions about all these things because they are deemed to have this knowledge of how we were created and where we came from. So people look to them as great, wise men who hold the secrets of the creation story. This is what gives them all their authority. It's a very important and fascinating topic.

What happened to start you off?

Well, the story's been published a number of times, so it's pretty well-known. I went to Britain in 1987, not intending to do anything like this. In fact, I left the Berkeley law school with the idea that I was going to study insurance law. But I never got started on that research project.

I had an office at University College, London. When I went into my office from Hampstead Heath, I had to walk past London's leading scientific bookstore. There in the main window they used to feature these books about evolutionary theory and all the controversy surrounding it, starting with Richard Dawkins' *The Blind Watch-Maker*. Dawkins' book is really the most influential statement on contemporary Darwinism. So, I got fascinated by it.

Then I began to realise what these people were doing – Dawkins, Gould and all the others. They're not involved in real science at all, that is, in the sense of testing hypotheses with repeatable experiments. Their game is story-telling! And they put it across with verbal tricks, semantics, shifting definitions, and all sorts of rhetorical tricks which are really my business to understand. So, I thought, “My job as a law professor is to spot this sort of stuff. I'm trained to know the tricks, so I guess I should show other people how to do it.” And that's what got me started.

Has writing about Darwinism affected your legal career?

Not in any significant way. It did affect it, but not in the way many people might think. For example, my colleagues in the law faculty have always been very understanding and supportive. I took it up when I was already an established senior law professor. So my career was never really at risk. But, over time, I began to spend more and more time travelling to lectures and writing books, and less and less time on my work as a law professor. Eventually, I decided that the only honest thing to do was to retire early from my professorship. And so I did that recently. This is the first year in which I'm not teaching at all (2001).

How have images of the famous Scopes' Monkey Trial in 1925 in Tennessee shaped the debate over evolution in the ensuing years?

Oh, they've had a great influence. Just as the debacle over Galileo in the Renaissance has shaped all future discussion of the science/religion interchange, so the lasting images of the Scopes' Trial have profoundly affected the ongoing

debate. But in both cases I think the wrong lesson has been drawn. From the Galileo case, what we really learn is that a man who thinks for himself is apt to get in trouble with his other professors and the people who control the funding. The problem was not only with the Catholic Church. Galileo's scientific colleagues were also to blame.

Of course, at the time, the Catholic Church was the ruling intellectual power; the problem was that all the professors of natural science happened to be affiliated with the church. But today, the equivalent of the college of cardinals is not a group of guys in red hats who sit in Rome, but the National Academy of Sciences in Washington DC and their equivalent bodies in other countries. In other words, these people are the academic elite. And the academic elite is never really in favour of freedom of thought. Why? Because the academic elite is the people who get a name for themselves by establishing their theories. And so naturally, I guess, they don't want to see them overturned. That's the lesson from Galileo.

And from Scopes' trial what we discover is that there was a popular movement that was wary of the intellectuals. They wanted to know if the elite was telling them the truth. However, they weren't very good at framing the questions. That's still true today. People aren't sure as to what questions they should ask of the intellectual elite, so they have to be taught how to frame them. And that's what I'm trying to do.

So the group that was trying to impose a thought-control system on the rest of us was not a group of fundamentalists but the scientific elite and the American Civil Liberties Union. They don't want anyone disagreeing with them. However, since the common people were not clever enough in framing the issue, they came out looking as if they were the inquisitors who wanted to stop freedom of thought.

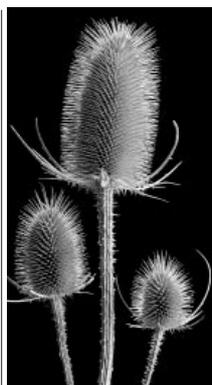
You say teachers in a democracy have a duty to deal fairly with both sides of the issue. Is that happening? Are free speech issues involved?

Darwinian evolution has become the creation myth of our culture.

Yes, there certainly are! We are working hard to establish the idea of dealing fairly with both sides of the debate over the screaming objections of the academic elite and the professional educators. What is at issue can be well illustrated by the great controversy from Kansas last year.

Here you have the Kansas board of education with very little power or authority, which mounts an ineffective protest against the dogmatic teaching of evolution in its schools. Remember that the bi-coastal elites in America, from New

The group that was trying to impose a thought-control system on the rest was not the fundamentalists but the scientific elite.



York, Washington and Los Angeles, barely know where Kansas is – they call it “fly-over” country. So they’re not deeply concerned about what 16 year-olds in Kansas are learning in their high schools – in fact, they’re probably not sure whether they actually have high schools in Kansas! Nor do they care.

But when they hear about a Kansas revolt against Darwinian evolution, they get very panicky because they are afraid that the ordinary people *will* learn to think for themselves. And the good people in Kansas are thinking. They are no longer prepared to buy the line of the scientific elite – that evolution is something you must believe no matter how crazy it may sound to you.

So I’m convinced that all we need to do is to get fair-minded teaching and a fair-minded public hearing of all of the evidence. Then, if we can have an unprejudiced look at all this information, the whole Darwinian system will collapse of its own absurdity. And I think the other side secretly agrees with us because that’s why they’re so desperate to keep the issue from getting on the table.

Do you sense a feeling of desperation in the current public debate?

Well, yes. But, there are two sides to it. There’s both desperation and overconfidence. Of course, that may sound self-

contradictory or paradoxical, but it isn’t really. There is certainly an intellectual desperation. Darwinists still can’t figure out why everybody doesn’t believe their theories; all they can do is repeat the same worn-out arguments time and time again.

On the other hand, their overconfidence comes from the fact that they have control of the newspapers, television networks, educational system, and government money. On a power ratio, they’re 99 to our 1. And so that makes them overconfident.

Now, I believe that the explanation for the origin of life that’s based on truth will eventually win the contest. Having the numbers at the moment proves nothing. Eventually, the intelligent design movement will split their constituency like a wedge splits a log. Then their groups and power will turn in against themselves and Darwinism as an intellectual force will implode. But we haven’t achieved that yet. So we’ll have to wait and see if it happens.

Have you got a lot of people working on the “log-splitting”?

Yes, we have. In fact, more and more people are crossing over to us all the time. One of the assets that we now have is that this is the age of internet communications and talk-back radio. So, it’s easier to get around the “gate-keepers”: that is, the people who control the journals and the newspapers and the like, than it was a generation ago.

How important is the definition of terms in the debate between evolutionists and people in the “intelligent design” school?

It’s all important. For instance, I like to tell audiences that when I teach law students how to read a statute, I always say to them that the tendency is to think that the “Definitions” section in a piece of legislation is the least important part of the statute. Of course, we all know what these words mean, right? But they don’t. You see, it’s how particular words are defined in the statute that matters.

I like to give an example of one of our federal laws that makes it illegal to possess a fire-arm under certain circumstances. But it turns out in this legislation that a hand grenade is defined as a fire-arm, whereas a pistol or a rifle is not. You see, it’s what we call a “term of art” – it doesn’t mean what you think it means in ordinary language.

The same applies to the use of terms in any discussion of evolution. For example, evolution can be used to refer to any

change, any variation in living organisms whatsoever. It can also refer to the whole creation process – from the first amoeba up to Bill Clinton. You need to watch how the terms are used in an argument. Often people switch the meaning of the terms and argue illogically like this: any variation proves that evolution is a fact, which proves that evolution created us all, which proves that God had nothing to do with creation. You can see how an invalid argument can be constructed by manipulating these definitions.

Have you ever been to a carnival where they play the game of spot the “pea under the shell”? They’re always moving the pea and you can’t see it – it’s done so rapidly. The shifting definition of evolution is like the pea under the shell game. The pea is always being switched.

Scientists often play this sort of game when they’re talking about science. For instance, the word “science” can simply mean the investigation of evidence. On that basis, some scientists claim that science shows that evolution is a fact which proves that natural selection is our creator. Obviously, that rules God out of the picture. But people also use the word “science” as referring to materialist philosophy, which seeks to explain everything in terms of material causes. On this second definition of “science,” you don’t actually need to look at any evidence at all. You just assume that material causes created us through natural selection. That way, you eliminate God from the picture from the very start. Scientists play this game all the time. They often shift back and forth between the philosophical definition and the empirical definition and confuse us.

Again, switching definitions is also used to discredit creationists. On the one hand, people can use the word “creationism” to mean extreme biblical literalism; on the other hand, it can be used to refer to anybody who believes in a Creator. So the definition is as broad or narrow as you wish. And evolutionists change it in mid-stream as is necessary for their argument.

In your opinion, what are the secondary issues in the creation-evolution debate?

I think that one of the secondary issues concerns the details of the chronology in Genesis. Many Christians get excited about that. But the message of evolution isn’t just that God created gradually over a long period of time so that the days of Genesis have to be understood as long historical periods. The real message of evolution is that God had nothing to do

with biological creation. So I say, in terms of biblical importance, that we should move from the Genesis chronology to the most important fact about creation, which is John 1:1: "In the beginning was the Word." Evolutionary biology is emphatic that God had nothing to do with it. It says: "In the beginning were the particles."

Again, I think it's fair to say that the questions of whether Darwinism leads to immoral consequences is a side issue too. Please, don't get me wrong here. It *has* led to many immoral consequences, so you can make a case for that. But the real question is whether it's true or not; not whether Darwinism has had undesirable results. If it's true, it's still true, even if it has had undesirable effects. But the important thing is that evolution is not true.

You try to detect baloney. What do you mean by that?

It's a word that has a wide currency even if it is slightly vulgar. Essentially, it means that someone is trying to trick you or fool you. So detecting baloney is really just learning to tell when people are bluffing. And that's what goes on in evolutionary biology all the time. We get bombarded with scientific baloney. Some of the most incredible claims come to us in the guise of science: "*science says*", we are told. And we are meant to meekly believe it. But if you can detect the baloney, then you'll start asking the questions that they don't want you to ask. That's all there is to it.

Can you point to any baloney in the debate?

Where do I start? There's so much of it! I've already covered the most important question, which relates to the way evolutionists constantly switch definitions and say that any variation in a species equals evolution which equals the explanation for the origin of the world. From there on in, it's all baloney.

The basic thing that Darwinists do is to present evidence very selectively. So, if there are several hundred million fossils, they will find a couple of groups that can be slotted into the evolutionary story. Then they're the only ones you'll ever hear about. But this is dishonest. All the evidence should go on the table. Scientists should test their theories against all the facts.

Mind you, creationists can be guilty of baloney too. It's quite widespread in use. Often when people talk about the subject

of evolution, they will say: "*Well here's what I prefer to believe.*" And then they'll sketch out whatever compromise makes them feel comfortable. And that's it as far as they're concerned. It never occurs to them to ask whether this view is true or not.

You've said that the problem with evolution is that Darwinists have failed to understand what needs to be explained. What do you mean?

I'm raising the central issue in the evolution debate, which is: how do we account for the highly complex information that's essential for the existence of life? For instance, just this morning I was reading an article in a distinguished scientific journal that says: "*Scientists have now found some of the chemicals that are needed to create life in outer space, and therefore life could have been created in outer space around one of the moons of Jupiter*", or whatever. Now this is all complete nonsense – my baloney detector has gone wild and is flashing red and beeping at high frequency at this point.

You see, what makes life *life* is not the chemicals. You can buy all the chemicals in a chemical store. You can mix them 'til the cows come home and you'll never get a living organism. We can't even make life when we have all the chemicals in a test tube and all the tools of science working for us. So the idea that the chemicals are going to link up in outer space – if you get a few of the right ones – is utterly absurd. What evolutionists fail to explain, and even fail to understand, is the very thing which needs to be explained – that information content is the key component to life. We may call it the software of life – the instructions that make all those complex processes work together to produce a living organism.

Darwinists should subject their claims to impartial investigation. But doesn't it cut both ways?

Absolutely! It does cut both ways, and I am prepared to do the same. All truth is God's truth. Further, if that endangers faith then faith deserves to be endangered. Of course, that really pin-points one of the issues over which I have intense and sometimes bitter discussions with Christian educators. They're looking for a safe way to approach this issue, and I'm looking for a way to get at the truth. At this point, we're travelling down two different roads.

In my book, *Defeating Darwinism By Opening Minds*, I warn Christian parents

that if we're going to teach our young people to think critically with open minds, we shouldn't be surprised if they turn the process on us. But is that a bad thing? Actually, Christians have a lot less to fear from this because our doctrines have been under the microscope for centuries. All our dirty laundry has been washed very publicly.

How do young people handle this sort of critical exposure and challenge?

The best way to deal with this subject from the standpoint of young people is to teach them everything there is to know about evolution. The worst way to deal with it is to try to protect them from it. Again, this is where I'm very critical of many Christian educators. But a lot of them are coming around – they're changing their view.

The idea in many Christian schools and colleges has been: "*Look, let's keep the kids Christian for as long as they're here. And then whatever happens after that, you know, it's not on our watch; it's not our fault*". That, of course, means that as soon as the kids get away from the protected environment and get to a university like this one, they hear about the peppered moth and all the bag of tricks that the Darwinians have, and they're bowled over by it. Since they've never heard it before,



Theistic evolution is exactly the same thing as atheistic evolution only with some meaningless, vacuous God-talk spread around.

they quite naturally come to the conclusion that their parents and teachers have been lying to them. So we set them up for a fall.

So I say that Christian kids should learn about all that stuff in advance. Then we don't have to worry about it.

Why do you think the argument from intelligent design is more compelling, than the argument from naturalistic evolution?

I think it's intuitive. When people see evidence of design, they automatically think of a designer. Many times women,

particularly older women, will hear my lecture. And they'll say: "Haven't these biologists ever seen a baby being born." You know, just out of their own experience of birth they know that there is a Creator that's involved. By the way, the atheist knows this too. Richard Dawkins says that biology is the study of complex things that look as if they were designed for a purpose. He sees it. Francis Crick, another arch-materialist, says that biologists have to remind themselves constantly that what they study was not created; it evolved. You see, if they didn't remind themselves constantly that there is no Designer, then the facts that stare them in the face might get their attention.

So what the scientific naturalists have to do is keep design, or intelligent design, off the table. Once it is on the table, it will inevitably triumph. And the more you look at the Darwinian mechanism that's supposed to fill the role of a Creator, the more obvious it is that it doesn't have what it takes. The so-called evolutionary mechanism can't manufacture complex information. Nor can it create new bio-

logical structures involving sophisticated interdependent systems.

Is there any problem in believing that God used natural selection and mutation to create the species?

Nobody is saying that God couldn't have done whatever he thought was appropriate. But the theory of evolution by natural selection says that we *had* to be created by some combination of chance and natural law. In Darwinian terms, this means mutation and natural selection were the cause of creation because there wasn't anything else available; you see, as far as Darwinists are concerned, God wasn't in the picture.

Of course, the theory of evolution by natural selection doesn't deny the existence of God. All it says is that God didn't have anything to do with the act of creation. The way I like to put it with my audience is this: I say, "It's not that God doesn't exist; it's just that He has never found gainful employment".

What about theistic evolution as a half-way house for Christians?

There are some very obvious problems with it. Theistic evolutionists need to realise that while there may not be any limitation on what God might have done, the reasoning of Darwinism is based on the assumption that God was not involved in creation. So theistic evolution is a misnomer that is based on a logical fallacy.

One question I like to ask theistic evolutionists is this: "If you believe that creation took place through natural selection and mutation, which by definition excludes God as a causal factor, why call the process theistic? Theistic evolution is exactly the same thing as atheistic evolution only with some meaningless, vacuous God-talk spread around. It's not really an intellectually honest position at all; it's a kind of political compromise.

How has molecular biology helped understand the problems of evolution? What do you consider the most significant discoveries?

Well, one of our members of the Wedge is Stephen C. Meyer. He is a scientist and gives a brilliant lecture about the information content in DNA. The information in DNA lies at the heart of molecular biology. Sadly, there's an illusion among scientific materialists that the discovery of DNA has supported materialism.

Now DNA is the molecule that governs heredity. In fact, it's the molecule of

life. What we learn from the sequence of nucleotides in DNA is that information is the essential part of all the life-processes. It's information that makes the cell run and keeps our bodies going. DNA is like a complex computer program or information system that is written in chemical letters in a chemical environment but is distinct from the chemicals themselves. We all know that there's a difference between the information that arranges the letters on the page of a book and the chemical properties of the ink which forms the letters on the paper. The two are quite distinct.

The question is: how does this amazingly complex information come together? By a mind of course! Did Bill Gates make billions of dollars out of his Windows programs by leaving the design of each system up to chance. You don't need to be a genius to work that one out.

What sort of materials can people get if they want to pursue this further, if they want to educate their children, if they want to get books into school libraries?

In terms of books, a good place to start is with my first book on the subject – *Darwin on Trial*. I have also published another one in the past year called *The Wedge of Truth*. They are useful starting-points. Then there are books by my colleagues: Jonathon Wells' *Icons of Evolution*, Michael Behe's *Darwin's Black Box*, and William Dembski's *Intelligent Design*. All the other books that come out will be listed at our websites.

Professor Phillip E. Johnson is the Jefferson E. Peyser Professor of Law, Emeritus, at the University of California, Berkeley, in San Francisco. He has also been a Visiting Professor at Emory University and University College, London. His books on the subject of Darwinism include Darwin on Trial, Reason in the Balance, Defeating Darwinism by Opening Minds, Objections Sustained and The Wedge of Truth. He also serves as an elder in the Presbyterian Church, USA.

Rev. Peter Hastie is the Issue Editor of Australian Presbyterian and the Minister of Ashfield Presbyterian Church, Sydney. ap

Sadly, there's an illusion among scientific materialists that the discovery of DNA has supported materialism.

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The bombing of Darwin

Philosophy, not science, drove evolution. Today it's a theory under threat.

The question of how the universe began is generally answered in the scientific community by referring to naturalistic evolution, which claims that the universe came about as the result of an unguided, undirected process, explained strictly in terms of chance and natural law. Many scientists prefer to attribute the existence of the universe to chance and randomness, rather than to an all-powerful, purpose-driven God. Recently however, it is increasingly, and ironically, the scientific basis of Darwinism that has come under scrutiny.

In the 1920s a court challenge in Tennessee over teaching creation science in schools brought a significant victory for its opponents, a debate revived last year in Kansas. Today, however, the tables are turning, as evolution's inadequacies are highlighted in many different scientific disciplines. Growing numbers of scientists and others in related fields of inquiry, have become more vocal in their scepticism over the scientific validity of Darwin's theories. Michael Denton, an Australian medical doctor and molecular biologist wrote in his book *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*, that evolution "is still, as it was in Darwin's time, a highly speculative hypothesis entirely without direct factual support".

Indeed, John Ankerberg and John Weldon, in their book *The Creation Hypothesis*, state that "when one considers the great number of scientists who have expressed serious reservations regarding a particular area of evolutionary thought, their collective weight is formidable. Virtually all aspects of evolutionary theory have recently encountered major critique by someone. Thus collectively considered, what now remains factually and scientifically established in evolutionary theory as a whole would appear to be marginal."

Even the majority of Darwin's contemporaries did not agree fully with his theory, writes Nancy Pearcey, co-author of *How Now Shall We Live?* (with Charles Colson) and *The Soul of Science* (with Charles Thaxton). Many of them came to agree that some form of evolution or development had occurred, but they championed other mechanisms and



Tracy Gordon

causes to explain the process. Basically, they held that either God was directing the process or that it was propelled forward by some internal directing force.

Darwin himself appears to have wavered on the scientific validity of his theory, writing in a letter in 1882: "Though no evidence worth anything has as yet, in my opinion, been advanced in favour of a living being, being developed from inorganic matter, yet I cannot avoid believing the possibility of this will be proved some day in accordance with the law of continuity." It appears that over time Darwin rejected the role of a Creator, preferring to assign godlike powers to the laws of nature. The key to his thinking was his philosophical commitment.

Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) was regarded by the Victorians as the foremost philosopher of the age, and was an immensely popular prophet of evolution at a time when the idea had gripped the public imagination. He appears to have promoted Darwinism from a similar per-

spective. Though he was not persuaded by Darwin's scientific theory, he saw that once he had embraced philosophical naturalism he had no alternative but to accept some form of naturalistic evolution. Writing in *The Principles of Psychology*, he acknowledges that "the hypothesis of evolution is beset by serious difficulties scientifically", yet "save for those who still adhere to the Hebrew myth, or to the doctrine of special creations derived from it, there is no alternative but this hypothesis or no hypothesis."

Thomas Huxley (1825-1895), nicknamed "Darwin's bulldog", having surveyed early forms of evolutionary theory and finding them all unsatisfactory, nevertheless continued to nurse a "pious conviction that Evolution, after all, would turn out to be true". It seems that Huxley had long sought an alternative to the creation hypothesis that could be accepted by any "cautious reasoner". He was so eager to be freed from this dilemma, that

Darwinism won because it provided a scientific rationale for those already committed to a purely naturalistic account.



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he was willing to champion any naturalistic theory, even one he himself found scientifically implausible, writes Pearcey.

So what was the attraction of Darwinism? Pearcey argues that Darwinism won less because it fitted the empirical data than because it provided a scientific rationale for those already committed to a purely naturalistic account of life.

Richard Lewontin, a Harvard biologist, revealed in an article in 1997 that he accepted the standard story of evolution, not because he was without scepticism about the “unsubstantiated just-so stories” often labelled “science”, but because he had “a prior commitment, a commitment to materialism”. Lewontin admits that the commitment is not based on science. Instead, scientists accept materialism first, and then are “forced” to define science in such a way that it produces strictly materialistic theories.

So, what are some of the main scientific problems various scientists have identified within Darwin’s theories?

Within evolutionary theory, the first stage on the road to human life, writes Michael Denton, is presumed to have been the buildup, by purely chemical synthetic processes occurring on the surface of the earth, of all the basic organic compounds essential for the formation of a living cell. These are supposed to have accumulated in the primeval oceans, creating a so-called “prebiotic soup”. When conditions were just right, these compounds formed into large macromolecules, proteins and nucleic acids. And eventually, millions of years later, many of these macromolecules combined in such a way as to enable them to self-reproduce. This process continued in more and more complex ways, until eventually, through a process of natural selection, the first simple cell system emerged.

What is crucial to this hypothesis, is the existence, for millions of years, of a prebiotic soup of rich organic compounds. Denton comments that if this were indeed the case, some of this mater-

ial would very likely have been trapped in the sedimentary rocks. Yet, ancient sedimentary rocks have been closely examined in recent decades without any trace of these compounds being evident.

Even still, the formation of a single cell system from a “prebiotic soup” pales in comparison to the formation of a human being through these same processes. Molecular biology has revealed in recent years that the living cell is far more complex than Darwin ever thought. Such cellular complexity cannot come about in the gradual process outlined by Darwin, because all the coordinated pieces must be in place before they function at all, writes Michael Behe, a Professor of Biochemistry, at Pennsylvania’s Lehigh University.

The central assumption of Darwinism is that minor changes accumulate to create major changes between organisms. This assumption has been disputed for decades. For instance, writes Pearcey, it has been known for a long time that minor variations, like the differences between dog breeds, do not add up in any consistent direction. “And if they’re not going anywhere in the first place, they won’t lead to major evolutionary innovations, no matter how vast the allotted time”.

Anthropic principle: In the field of cosmology, we encounter the idea of the anthropic principle, which basically tells us that the universe is finely tuned to support life. “Imagine a universe-creating machine, with thousands of dials representing the gravitational constant, the charge on the electron, the mass of the proton, etc. Each dial has many possible settings, and what you discover is that even the slightest change would make a universe where life

was impossible,” says geophysicist Stephen Meyer. What we see in the world around us is that each dial is set to the exact value necessary to keep the universe running.

Principle of irreducible complexity: Michael Behe offers an explanation of this principle: “By irreducibly complex I mean a single system composed of several well-matched, interacting parts that contribute to the basic function, wherein the removal of any one of the parts causes the system to effectively cease functioning. An irreducibly complex system cannot be produced directly (that is, by continuously improving the initial function, which continues to work by the same mechanism) by slight, successive modifications of a precursor system, because any precursor to an irreducibly complex system that is missing a part is by definition nonfunctional.

An irreducibly complex biological system, if there is such a thing, would be a powerful challenge to Darwinian evolution. Since natural selection can only choose systems that are already working, then if a biological system cannot be produced gradually it would have to arise as an integrated unit, in one fell swoop, for natural selection to have any thing to act on,” says Michael Behe. For example, like a microscopic motorboat, bacteria are able to move from one location to another in the human body with complexity and efficiency. With over 50 different protein parts, it is hard to imagine a machine with so many necessary pieces.

So, intelligent design or Darwinian evolution? Even Darwin did not deny the evidence for design. Rather, he hoped to show that living things only appear designed while really being the result of chance and natural selection. Darwin’s goal, writes Francisco Ayala of the University of California, was to “exclude God as the explanation accounting for the obvious design of organisms”.

Tracy Gordon is finance and IT editor of the Medical Observer Weekly, and worships at Ashfield Presbyterian Church, Sydney. ^{ap}

Even Darwin did not deny the evidence for design... His goal was to exclude God as the explanation.

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Evolution in the dock

If science were the stock market, the regulators would be moving in.

The scene is set in a boardroom high above the noisy bustle of the financial district. The room is filled with rich and powerful would-be investors, eagerly listening to the story unravelling before them.

“Just imagine it, ladies and gentlemen—a once in a lifetime opportunity, and here’s the proof.” The stock promoter’s face breaks into a sly smile as he flashes up the impressive, full-colour slide showing the growth of the shares. He continues: “As you can clearly see from this information, these shares have grown a staggering nine per cent for each of the years 1997, 1998, and 1999. You simply can’t lose if you invest at this juncture!”

At this point the stock promoter pauses, knowing that he can stop the hard sell. He has won them over. He can tell by the looks on their faces that they have trusted his evidence and believed in his specialised knowledge of the company. They’ll be pulling out their chequebooks at a moment’s notice.

However, the stock promoter has not told the investors the whole story. While it was true that the stock he is promoting had indeed risen by more than nine per cent in 1997, 1998, and 1999, he failed to tell them it declined 12 per cent in 2000, and figures for the first half of 2001 were just as dismal.

He chose to withhold that information because, after all, who would buy into an investment that appeared to be a losing cause?

Such behaviour would earn him a jail sentence for stock fraud under United States securities laws.

The scenario described above is an amplification of an illustration used in Jonathan Wells’ book *Icons of Evolution*. Wells, who holds two doctorates (one in biology), compares the shifty actions of the stock promoter with the behaviour of evolutionary theorists within the biological scientific establishment.

In this lively and eye-opening book, Wells methodically picks apart the main tenets or “icons” of evolution and shows them all to be either outright fakes, misrepresentations of the real data, or, as in the case of our fraudulent stock promoter, only providing evidence which fits easily



Tim Grootenboer

into evolutionary theory and ignoring data which doesn’t.

Wells stops short of calling evolutionary theorists outright frauds; but the glaring deceit and distortion he uncovers makes me wonder why we haven’t risen up against evolutionary theory not simply as an incorrect theory to describe the origin of living species, but as just plain bad science.

One of the best examples of the ‘bad science’ evolutionists are employing is the infamous use of embryological similarities between different animals species. The two diagrams accompanying this review are both from Wells’s book and show how incredible this deceit can be.

Wells stops short of calling evolutionary theorists outright frauds, but he uncovers glaring deceit and distortion.



Originally put forward by German embryologist Ernst Haeckel before 1900, the classic diagram on the left (figure 1) shows embryos of several different animal species which are virtually indistinguishable in their early phases and only become different from one another in later stages of development. This similarity appears quite obvious to anyone who examines this scientific evidence, regardless of whether they have any scientific training or not.

Once you see the similarities between the early stages of the developing animal embryos, it isn’t a great stretch of the imagination to extend this idea of similar-

ity back to the origin of species, to a common ancestor.

Charles Darwin and those who followed after him theorised that the dramatic similarity of the early stages of embryonic development are direct evidence that all these animal species have a common ancestor and that these similarities reflect the characteristics of the supposed common ancestor.

Haeckel’s hand-drawn diagrams are so stunningly clear in their support for evolutionary theory that they are still in wide use in biology textbooks today as evidence for evolution. I remember seeing them in the introductory textbooks I used when studying my undergraduate degree in biology. In fact, as a high school science teacher, I have referred students to this diagram as evidence for evolution when teaching the topic of evolutionary theory in my classroom.

So what is the harm in this one little diagram, so ubiquitous and seemingly faultless as proof? It seems the evolutionary theorists have it sewn up. They have told us they have the proof, and they have been presenting it in ways like using Haeckel’s embryos for decades. Evolution is proven fact, they say, so why don’t we just accept it?

Because of evolution’s iron-clad support, I have struggled at times with trying to work out how my own Christian faith could be reconciled with what I know to be rational, scientific evidence. How could anyone come to any conclusion other than evolution when presented with all the facts? This is precisely where Jonathan Wells comes in.

Wells expertly and deftly cuts through the haze of history to unravel the truth about the “proofs” for evolution, including Haeckel’s embryos. It has opened my eyes to the reality of evolutionary evidences and washed away any lingering doubts I had concerning the truth behind the theory.

What the textbooks don’t tell you, and what the evolutionary theorists have neglected to tell the public, is that it has been known within academic embryology circles for quite some time that Haeckel intentionally faked his drawings in order

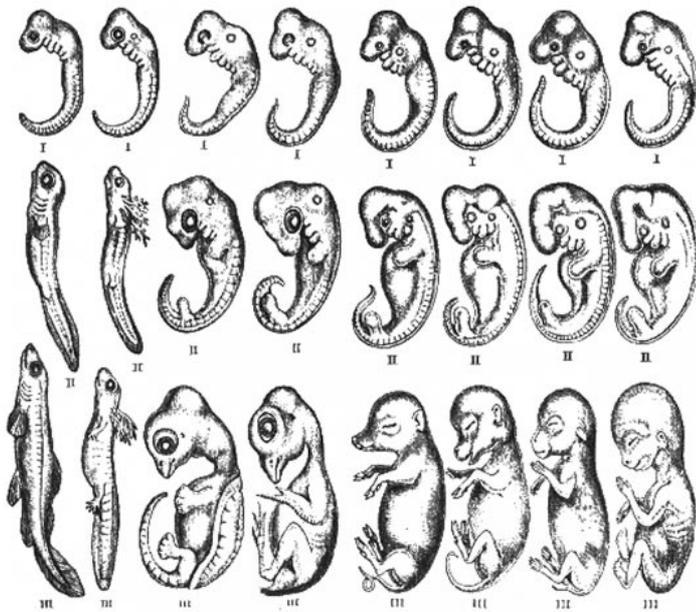


Figure 1: Haeckel's deception

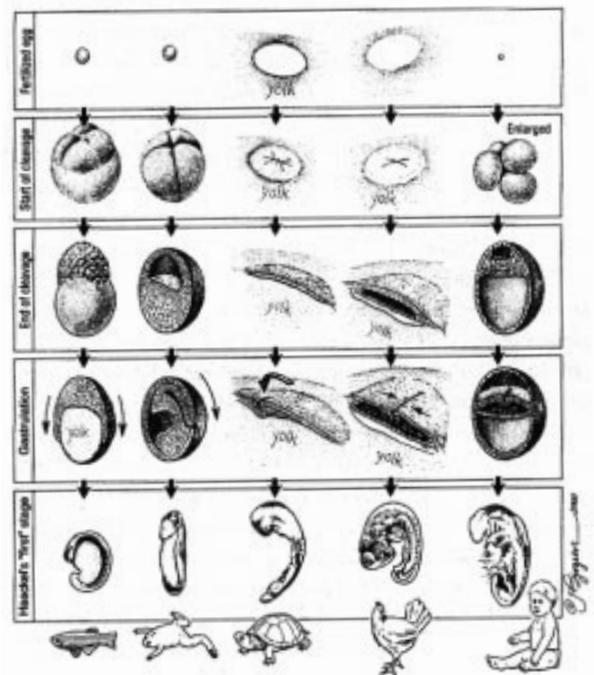


Figure 2: A more accurate representation

to emphasise the similarities between them. Not only did he fraudulently present his findings, but Haeckel also hand-picked those animal species which would best support his theory.

The second diagram (figure 2) is a more accurate representation of what really does occur in embryonic development. The real scope of things shows that the embryos are actually very different early in development, in strange and complex ways that science is only beginning to understand. Only part-way through development do the embryos reach their highest similarity, and even then the true representation shows that the similarities are weak. From there, the embryos develop further, becoming very different indeed by the time they are finished.

If Haeckel had more accurately depicted his observations, if he had chosen several other animal species or had more widely surveyed the animal kingdom in his analysis, he would have found that there was actually a great diversity among animal embryos, not similarity.

to emphasise the similarities between them. Not only did he fraudulently present his findings, but Haeckel also hand-picked those animal species which would best support his theory.

Why then does this example still persist as a teaching device in proving evolutionary theory? Why the need among evolutionists to put forward examples and “proofs” which aren’t really true at all?

As Jonathan Wells aptly describes, the problem with evolutionary theory is that it isn’t just a scientific theory. It goes beyond the scope of science as a tool to discover more about the natural world and instead rests upon a philosophical viewpoint called naturalism.

According to naturalistic philosophy, the only thing that exists in reality is this physical world. There can be no spiritual realm nor can there be any supernatural causes invoked to explain any of the phenomena we observe in the world around us. Thus, a creation which was formerly seen as the handiwork of a supernatural God has been reduced to being the result of mere chance playing upon the leftover stardust of a yet unexplained Big Bang.

Evolutionists begin from the philosophical viewpoint of naturalism, and allow that philosophy to dictate what can and can’t pass for science. As a result, natural selection is the only possible option. It is circular reasoning, which by defining science as only dealing with natural causes, automatically eliminates any other explanation of the natural world. It also relegates the science they do to a devotion to an ideology rather than an objective pursuit of the truth.

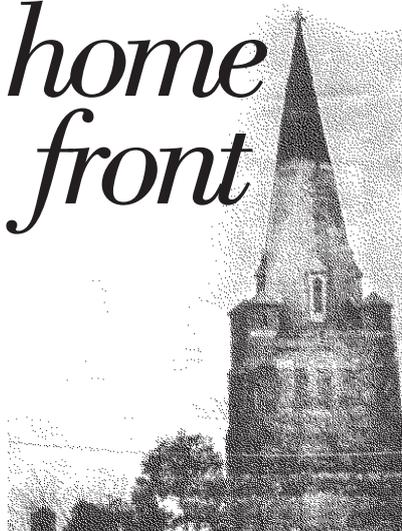
Wells’s book is one of several which have been written in recent years to combat this problem. In *Icons Of Evolution*, Wells exposes the exaggerated claims and deceptions of the main evidences for evolutionary theory. Others, such as Michael Behe’s *Darwin’s Black Box* and William Dembski’s *Intelligent Design* have proposed an explanation of life centred on design by an intelligent agent.

Together, these approaches provide a two-pronged attack on the Darwinian establishment. By exposing the false and misleading evidences of current evolutionary theory, and by simultaneously constructing an intellectually sound, objectively based theory reflective of the reality of creation, it may be possible, with God’s help, to bring the discipline of biology back within a biblical framework.

Icons of Evolution: Science or Myth? – Why much of what we teach about evolution is wrong
Jonathan Wells Ph.D
(Regnery Publishing, 2000, 338 pages)

Tim Grootenboer holds a Bachelor of Christian Studies (Hons) in biology from Redeemer College University in Ontario, Canada, and a Naturalist Certificate from the Au Sable Institute for Environmental Studies in Mancelona, Michigan. He teaches biology to secondary students at the St Andrew’s Cathedral School, Sydney, and worships at Ashfield Presbyterian Church. ^{ap}

home front



Message to US

The Moderator General of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, Rt. Rev. Jack Knapp, immediately wrote to the church in the United States on hearing of the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington.

"The Presbyterian Church of Australia wishes to express its deep sorrow and regret at the terrible attacks made on the people of America and more specifically in New York and Washington DC.

"Our people are deeply shocked and grieved at the terrible series of events that occurred last Tuesday September 11, 2001, which resulted in such horrific loss of innocent lives and on-going sufferings of those who survived. May the God of all comfort surround your Nation during this time of mourning, suffering and anguish.

"Please be assured that although the miles may separate us, we are united with you in our prayers and thoughts. We reflect with you upon the words which your President quoted from Psalm 23; "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." And may we further add those special words of comfort: "for you are with me, your rod and your staff they comfort me".

"May God bless America."

Mr Knapp has asked Australian congregations to spend time in prayer for all of the families affected by the tragedy. Let us also pray that God will help us each one to be a minister of mercy and compassion and an ambassador of kindness and reconciliation for his sake.

Coorparoo turns 75

Brisbane's Coorparoo Presbyterian Church is celebrating 75 years of

Presbyterian witness in the Coorparoo area. A church service with guest preacher, the state moderator Rev. John Nicol, is planned for 7 October at 9.30am, followed by a celebration luncheon. A special commemorative tea towel and carry bag will also be available for purchase. For more information contact Grace Hyland Ph.(07) 3398 4754.

Callide Valley anniversary

The Callide Valley Presbyterian Church, centred on Biloela in central Queensland is celebrating 70 years of witness with a weekend Camp at Callide Dam from 12 to 14 October. Any ex Callide Valleyites are welcome. For more information, contact Ivan Shepherdson, P.O.Box 257, Biloela, Qld 4715; phone (07) 4992 2084; email igshep@tpg.com.au

NSW assembly

Some of the highlights of the General Assembly of the PCNSW include: The new Moderator is the Rt. Rev. David Stone.

A new history of Presbyterianism in Australia has been written, financed by the PWA Market of 1999.

A scholarship scheme will be set up for candidates to the ministry, including deaconesses.

Presbyterian Schools Scots Sydney, Scots Bathurst, PLC Armidale and the Armidale Boys College have all shown financial losses and have been put on notice. PLC Croydon showed a profit.

All the trustees resigned and new ones were elected. The General Secretary Mr Keith Mar resigned.

Rev. R Tsai resigned as director of Christian Education to become a full-time hospital chaplain.

Congregations were asked to support the Centenary Fund in aid of Ron and Jean Lyons working with indigenous people on Cape York.

Once again the Christmas collection will be for TEAR Australia.

New elders

The following elders were ordained and/or inducted at the following churches: St Andrews, Townsville, Queensland: Mr Robert James Burns, ordination and induction; Mr John Gregory Donnell and Mr Wayne Henry Knapp, induction.

Ashburton Presbyterian Church, Victoria: Mr Richard Jeganathan, induction.

Canterbury Presbyterian Church, Victoria: Mr Simon Beare, induction, and Mr Ian Hodge, ordination and induction.

St Kilda Presbyterian Church, Victoria: Mr B. Mills and Mr H. Cheatley, induction.

Croydon Hills Presbyterian Church, Victoria: Mr Robert Paix, ordination and induction.

St Paul's Presbyterian Church, Mittagong, NSW: Mr John Edward Currie, induction.

Elders' website

The Elders Association website is now on line, according to website manager David Crawford. It is intended to be a useful resource for the church in general as well as the association.

We would appreciate any feedback that you may have and there is even space for us to insert any particular comments

Robert McAfree Brown

1920 - 2001

Robert McAfee Brown, a Presbyterian theologian who bridged tensions between Protestants and Catholics and became one of the best-known advocates of the liberation theology movement, has died, reports Associated Press. He was 81. Living in California in the 1960s, Brown protested against the Vietnam War and co-founded the group Clergy and Laity Concerned About Vietnam. He was jailed as a Freedom Rider during the civil rights movement, and later emerged as an advocate of Latin America's liberation theology movement.

Born 28 May 1920, Brown was the son of a clergyman. He graduated from Amherst College in 1943 and was ordained a Presbyterian minister the next year. Brown wrote 28 books, spent decades teaching religion at such schools as St. Paul's Macalester College, New York's Union Theological Seminary, Stanford University and the Pacific School of Religion at Berkeley. He also was known for his sly wit, once writing an essay called "Six Elegant Proofs for the Existence of Santa Claus".

He married in 1944 and had four children.

(constructive) that you have to offer.

The address is: www.elders.pcnsww.org.au.

NT lecturer

Rev. Peter Richardson has been appointed lecturer in New Testament at **Reformed College of Ministries** in Queensland from 1 January 2002 to 1 January 2004. Peter was acting principal of the college in 2000 and lectured in New Testament in 2001. He has extensive experience in pastoral work, having been minister of the Annerley congregation, then an overseas missionary in Bangladesh. He also lectured in Greek after church union in 1977.

South Yarra appointment



Stuart Bonnington

Rev. Stuart McNairst Bonnington was inducted into the pastoral charge of **South Yarra (Vic)** on 30 August by **Rev. Dr S P Swinn**, moderator of the Melbourne East Presbytery. **Professor Douglas Milne** preached.

With more than a century of mission experience in sub-Saharan Africa (primarily Nigeria and Sudan), **Action Partners** has given rise to churches in both the Sudan and Nigeria, that now number nearly 5 million believers.

Pioneers was formed in Australia just three years ago, from the joining of two well-known Australian missions, **Asia Pacific Christian Mission** and **South Seas Evangelical Mission**.

Both **Action Partners** and **Pioneers** have a policy of working with local national Christians among largely unreached people groups. **Pioneers** has adopted a creative approach to mission structure, leadership and philosophy, and has captured the attention of a new generation of Christian mission workers. As the two missions unite, they will come under the banner and directorship of **Pioneers**.

Rev. Timothy Meyers, director of **Pioneers of Australia**, says: "After many years of declining interest, cross cultural mission is once again squarely on the agenda of the Aussie church. And young people are leading the way. All around Australia, in churches, on uni campuses, and in Bible colleges, I meet increasing numbers of young people who are passionate for Christ, ethnically savvy, and driven by a hunger to experience and contribute to holistic, cross-cultural ministry."

Candle Day

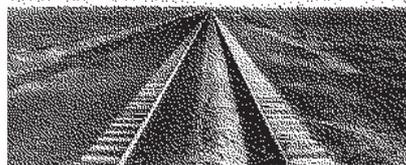
Amnesty International's Candle Day is a day in which thousands of people become actively involved as human rights defenders, collecting in capital cities all around Australia, raising funds for Amnesty International to continue its vital work. This includes protecting religious freedom. The organisation is seeking helpers. See advertisement for collectors in this issue of *AP*.

RTC's new home

Extensive renovation works are nearly finished at the **Reformed Theological College's** **Waurms Ponds Campus** near Geelong, Vic. The college moved its campus there at the end of 1999.

The **RTC** now provides a self-contained conference venue complete with accommodation, in a tranquil parkland setting 10 kilometres from Geelong. It caters to conferences of up to 120 people, plus church camps and retreats for smaller groups.

across australia



Bishop on the move

The recently elected Archbishop of Sydney, the **Most Rev. Peter Jensen**, has commenced his appointment with a demanding round of speaking engagements, addressing a range of issues confronting Australia and Christians today.

Archbishop Jensen, who has a PhD from Oxford and was principal of Moore Theological College, said in his first media conference: "I want to stake my life on the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. That's the agenda; that's the news as far as I'm concerned."

He has addressed issues including the need for reconciliation between various groups in Australia, the call for Christians to witness to their belief in all areas of life, and various social problems. Recently he spoke about the nature of true freedom at the annual Town Hall Mission in Sydney.

Mission marriage

One of Australia's oldest and well respected mission agencies will join this month with **Pioneers of Australia**, a relatively new international mission agency involved in team-based, cross-cultural church planting, reports *Elizabeth Kendal*.

Edward (Ted) McPhee

1930 - 2001

Ted, who lived in the Bell district in Queensland all his life, was born in Dalby in September 1930 and lived at "Dalmoora" with his parents and brothers. After making a personal commitment to the Lord in the early '60s, Ted became very involved in the church.



In 1964 Ted was elected to the committee of the **Bell Presbyterian church**, becoming vice president in 1967, and treasurer in 1968, a position held until the end

of December 1998 when he stepped back to become assistant. In February 2001 he resigned from that position because of ill health.

He became an elder in 1966, serving as session clerk in the 1980s and again from 1990 until February this year. Ted also represented the Bell Charge on the Presbytery of Darling Downs. In February, Ted became elder emeritus owing to ill health and on 28 May he passed from this life.

A thanksgiving celebration for his life and faithful service was held in the Bell Presbyterian Church on 31 May.

Asylum seekers

The NSW Council of Churches is urging Immigration Minister Mr Philip Ruddock to expedite the system of processing asylum seekers to reduce the waiting time, during which detainees suffer extreme frustration and even trauma.

NSW Council of Churches president **Ray Hoekzema** said, "While ever the system is slow and cumbersome, detainees' lives are being wasted and the cost to the Australian taxpayer skyrocketing. The sooner the system can be streamlined the sooner detainees can be processed and either released to the community or, when appropriate, sent back to their country of origin."

Mr Hoekzema said: "No matter what a person's station in life is, the churches believe they are entitled to justice. Detainees need to have decent living arrangements. Families must not be separated. Each person should have the opportunity to prove to the Australian government that they are fleeing a desperate situation in their homeland and therefore on humanitarian grounds, deserve a fair go in Australia."

Olympic Bible effort

The Bible Societies of the world distributed some 633 million Scripture items in 2000, spurred on by the massive distribution at the Sydney Olympic and Paralympic Games.

According to the **United Bible Societies (UBS)** Scripture Distribution Report 2000, published in April, worldwide celebrations of the millennium and the international interest in the Olympic Games held in Sydney were used by Bible Societies across the world to further the spread of the Gospel.

The categories of Scripture registering the most notable increase in distribution in 2000 were New Reader Selections, which increased by 16.7 per cent to 49.8 million, and New Testaments, which rose by 14.8 per cent to 23.5 million.

"The efforts of the **Bible Society in Australia** in producing sports-related Bibles, New Testaments and Gospels for distribution before and during the millennium Olympic Games in Sydney in September undoubtedly contributed to the sharp rise," UBS reports.

Online in the Middle East

When the **Bible Society in Lebanon** put the address of their website on all email addresses, 2000 people immediately downloaded the whole Arabic Bible. The site now has 11,000 visitors a year from most Arabic countries.

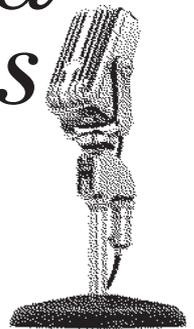
We didn't mean it

News editor **Walter Bruining** reads a lot of newsletters and church bulletins. Here is his collection – not all from Presbyterian churches – of what the author didn't mean to say.

- Don't let worry kill you—let the church help.
- Remember in prayer the many who are sick of our church and community.
- For those of you who have children and don't know it, we have a nursery downstairs.
- Jean will be leading a weight-management series Wednesday nights. She's used the program herself and has been growing like crazy!
- Next Sunday a special collection will be taken to defray the cost of the new carpet. All those wishing to do something on the carpet should come forward and do so.
- Thursday night—Potluck supper. Prayer and medication to follow.
- At the evening service tonight, the sermon topic will be "What is Hell?" Come early and listen to our choir practice.
- During the absence of our pastor, we enjoyed the rare privilege of hearing a good sermon when A. B. Doe supplied our pulpit.

- The Rev. Adam spoke briefly, much to the delight of his audience.
- The eighth graders will be presenting Shakespeare's "Hamlet" in the church basement on Friday at 7pm. The congregation is invited to attend this tragedy.
- Scouts are saving aluminium cans, bottles and other items to be recycled. Proceeds will be used to cripple children.

world news



Growth in Uganda

International Needs Network has been reporting encouraging results from their program in Uganda. Aside from the boom in evangelistic outreach, there has been another side effect. INN's **Dave Culross** says over an eight-week period, the church saw a rash of mysterious fires, one of which burned down a pastor's home. "Finally, the Christians decided they should band together and they declared two days of fasting and prayer. Since that time, there have been no further fires."

Culross says the church needs support. "Pray for protection physically and spiritually from the attacks on our Christian leaders there, and then pray that the superstitions of the Africans in these areas will be overcome and that the Gospel will be spread into new areas that have never heard it before."

Islam threat in Togo

Christians in the small, West African country of Togo face a subtle but growing threat from Islam.

"The only way people can come to Christ in many areas of our country is if they leave their surroundings and abandon their larger family. I am convinced that there are many Christians who are unable to declare themselves Christians

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openly for fear of persecution," said **Rev. Mitré Djakouti**, president of the **Assemblies of God in Togo**.

"There is a sort of quiet, constant opposition to Christians. Nothing too obvious. But, for example, when we want to start a new church in an area where the authorities are Muslim, we cannot get the necessary permissions and find it very difficult to get premises or land. In the vicinity of a church, the Muslim community will lodge formal complaints against the noise of singing or praying. They try to stop us meeting," Djakouti said.

Another problem Christians face is the increased level of community aid sponsored by Muslims, thanks to money and support from oil-rich countries such as Saudi Arabia.

Young people are also finding educational opportunities in Muslim countries. "The Muslims are after our young people," Djakouti said. "We are frightened and have much work to do. We have our teams of evangelists, and they are looked after by three pastors. But we wish we could offer the people more than just the message of the gospel. They have many needs."

Compass Direct

Presbyterian schism tipped

Most pastors in the largest Presbyterian denomination in the United States, the **Presbyterian Church (USA)**, think it will break apart on liberal-conservative lines by 2050, though they hope mutual tolerance will avert such a schism.

That is the view of 73 percent of church pastors in the PC (USA), according to a study released by the **Presbyterian Panel**, the research arm of the 2.5 million-member denomination.

The survey found that large majorities are willing "to tolerate different viewpoints" despite the conflict. But they also mostly believe that the church "is in trou-

ble" if members don't stand up for their beliefs.

US Presbyterians have split many times in the past 200 years, usually as smaller conservative groups staked out orthodoxy. The Presbyterian wings of North and South formed the present denomination in 1983, with some loss of conservatives.

The Presbyterian Church (USA), which on average is wealthier, more educated and more liberal than Lutherans or Baptists, often is viewed as a harbinger for the future of mainline Protestantism, whose denominations are divided over homosexuality and doctrinal pluralism.

First Lao Bible

For the first time ever, the Laotian people can now read the entire Bible in their own language – with the recent completion of the Lao Common Language Bible.

The translation of the Old Testament was completed in 1997, a 1973 version of the Lao Common Language New Testament was then revised, and the whole Bible has now been published as a single book. A total of 8485 Bibles have been printed in Korea and are being delivered to Laotian Christians.

The Bible Society in Australia

Religious lifestyle

Religious faith will experience a renaissance in the secular world – as a 'lifestyle product', according to German futurologist **Matthias Horx**. His newsletter, *2000X* acknowledges the high degree of secularism in Germany, with only 15 percent of the total population regarding faith in God as a decisive factor in their lives. Mr Horx is convinced that traditional Christian worship will be converted into "Gospeltainment".

Rescued from Jihad

Seventeen more Christians have been rescued from Islamic Jihad militants in Indonesia. When Jihad fighters attacked the Christian village of Cera last year, the men temporarily held off the attackers allowing the women and children a brief chance to flee. Outgunned and outnumbered, the men soon had to flee for their own lives. Many people have given to help rescue Christians captured and held hostage by Jihad terrorists. The rescues continue at low profile, a few at a time, and involve great risk – but are bearing fruit as families are reunited and

Christians are liberated. Altogether more than 1400 Christians have been rescued since the beginning of this year.

Christian Aid Mission

More attacks expected

The Washington DC based International Christian Concern received word from Indonesia that 3000 Jihad warriors are poised to attack and exterminate the remaining Christians in central Sulawesi. The violent clashes between armed members of the Muslim and Christian communities have been taking place since April last year.

The number of Christian refugees fleeing from the region has risen from 1800 in early June to more than 6000 by mid-July. The number continues to rise as more Christians are evacuated from the jungles and mountains where they are presently hiding following the attacks on their villages. One policeman said that, on the average, "10 Christians are killed every day".

"International Christian Concern is raising funds to help provide food, medicines, clothing, and shelter for the Christian refugees," says **Steven Snyder**, president and founder of the group.

London's megachurch

A church with room for 10,000 worshippers that will rank alongside the largest in the world is being planned for Britain.

The Kingsway International Christian Centre in Hackney, east London, is already Britain's biggest church, attracting 4000 worshippers every Sunday and claiming a total congregation of more than 7,000. Now its leaders want to construct a 10,000-seat arena for its evangelical services. The £22 million plans include an exhibition hall, a six-storey office block and a 130-room hotel. The complex will also act as a community centre, and will include a gym, a nursery, shops, restaurants and television facilities.

If the project is approved by Hackney council, the centre's capacity will equal that of St Peter's in the Vatican, easily outstripping Britain's best-known churches. Westminster Abbey seats 2000 and the Roman Catholic Westminster Cathedral 3000.

The Kingsway Centre's pastor, **Rev. Matthew Ashimolowo**, a convert from Islam, came to Britain from Africa 16 years ago and started with a congregation of 11 adults and six children.

Telegraph

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Crisis control

Afflictions separate good men from evil, suggests Maurice Roberts.

It is very clear from Scripture that good men do, and evil men do not, turn intuitively to God when confronted with troubles. When, for instance, David's followers turned against him after the sacking of Ziklag and were so upset at the loss of wife and children that they were near to stoning him, we are told that "David encouraged himself in the Lord his God" (1 Sam. 30:6).

Similarly, when Sennacherib and Rabshakeh laid siege to Jerusalem and all earthly hope of deliverance was cut off, Hezekiah, we are told, "spread it before the Lord" (2 Kings 19:14). Like a flash of lightning, the souls of good men turn upwards to God when trials and fears confront them.

Whole psalms appear to have been written very largely for the purpose of encouraging believers to think of God when calamity strikes or when perplexity overshadows them. "I will not be afraid of ten thousands," (Ps. 3:6), affirms David. "I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies" (Ps. 18:3). "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?" (Ps 27:1).

These and scores of similar passages in the psalms reassure us that godly men are not more ready to raise their minds to God in trouble than he is to hear and help them. Indeed, the whole Bible sets this truth before us.

On the other hand, the unconverted have no spiritual access to God in the time of distress but are commonly swallowed up with despair like Saul and Judas; or else they harden themselves against God, like Pharaoh, till they become reckless.

Afflictions, therefore, are a fan in God's hand to separate between good and evil men. All men are good company in fair weather but the storms of life prove spiritual character. In trouble, where do our thoughts fly to? To "curse God and die" is the essential and inevitable philosophy of graceless men when they are surprised by sudden calamity. But the child of God instinctively looks at life's miseries with a theological eye and finds God to be a comfort when all seems as bad as it can be: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in

IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD



him" (Job 13:15).

To have God in his mind and thought is the believer's constant source of strength. The martyr languishes in the flames but his mind flies upward to God his Saviour and looks forward blissfully to the glory that awaits him even as his body sinks to ashes. The imprisoned Christian forgets the harsh regime of the camp, the daily grind and gruelling labour, as his mind soars upward on the wings of hope to remember God. The weary missionary, struggling with unfamiliar syllables and convoluted grammar in his appointed sphere of service sees beyond the frustrations of the hour as he remembers God, his "exceeding great reward" (Gen. 15:1). The faithful pastor of a congregation, entombed in his study and confronted with an impossible daily agenda of duties, brightens in his heart and feels his pulse quicken as he remembers his Master above.

The thought of God should be the Christian's panacea. It should cure all his ills at a stroke. And what an infinity there is in the thought of God! Nothing can approach in beauty to the idea of the true and living God. That there exists a Being who is infinite in power, knowledge and goodness, that that Being cares for me with a perfect love as though I were the only man in existence, that he loved me before I was born and created me to enjoy him eternally and that he sent his Son to suffer the agony of the cross to secure my eternal happiness – that, surely, must be a thought to end all sorrow. It ought to be and often it is.

There is a difference, alas, between

things as they are and things as we perceive them. Our perceptions of God suffer more than our perceptions of natural things because we are depraved and do not make it our life's work daily to enrich our idea of God from Scripture.

It is our folly that we allow ourselves to look at life's problems as if they were somehow isolated from God. As soon as we see our problems in the light of God's Being and perfection, we are emancipated from alarm and terror.

It therefore remains a principle of universal application that we can cope with our afflictions just so long as we "look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen" (2 Cor. 4:18).

If God be God, then no insoluble problems exist. And if God be my God, then no problem of mine is without its appropriate solution. There is in God just exactly what is needed to solve every riddle of life. Such a Being is God that he comprehends in himself all that we could ever need to neutralise all evils, veto all temptations, negate all sorrows and compensate for all losses.

More still, there is in God such a supply of competence and wisdom that he is able to transform every ill into good as soon as it touches us. God has, so to say, the Midas touch; by which all the Christian's problems turn to gold in his hands. To be told that "all things work together for good" (Rom. 8:28) to us is to have more than a cordial. It is to have the elixir of life.

It must follow from what has been said that the degree of a Christian's peace of mind depends upon his spiritual ability to interpose the thought of God between himself and his anxiety. When the dark cloud of trouble first looms up on the horizon of our thought, then is the time to apply our theology in downright earnest. For it is not outward circumstances that can drag us down, but our own reaction of despair to them, when we fail to perceive the hidden hand of God in all events.

This edited excerpt is taken from The Thought of God by Maurice Roberts (Banner of Truth, 1993).

ap

J. Budziszewski

*Dr J. Budziszewski is associate professor in the departments of government and philosophy in the University of Texas. He is the author of *Written on the Heart: The Case for Natural Law (IVP)*, *The Revenge of Conscience: Politics and the Fall of Man (Spence Publishing)* and *How to Stay Christian in College (Navpress)*.*



Seventeen years ago I stood in the government department of the University of Texas to give a talk. I was fresh out of graduate school, and it was my here's-why-you-should-hire-me lecture. I wanted to teach about ethics and politics, so as academic job seekers do everywhere, I was showing the faculty my stuff.

So what did I tell them? Two things. The first was that we human beings just invent the difference between good and evil; the second was that we aren't responsible for what we do anyway. And I laid out a 10-year plan for rebuilding ethical and political theory on these two propositions.

Does that seem to you a good plan for getting a job teaching the young? Or does it seem a better plan for getting committed to the state mental hospital? Well, I wasn't committed to the state mental hospital, but I did get a job teaching the young.

I've been asked to tell you how I became a nihilist, and I've been asked to tell you how I escaped from nihilism. Perhaps I should first explain just what my argument for nihilism was.

As I mentioned above, I made two claims: first, that we make up the difference between good and evil, and second, that we aren't responsible for what we do anyway. My argument reversed this order.

First denied free will. The reasoning was not very original. Everything we do or think or feel, I thought, is just an effect of prior causes. It doesn't matter that some of those prior causes are my previous deeds or thoughts or feelings, because those would be effects of still earlier

causes, and if we traced the chain further and further back, sooner or later we would come to causes that are outside of me completely, such as my heredity and environment.

Second, I concluded that if we don't have free will, then good and evil can't make sense. On the one hand I'm not responsible for my deeds, so I can't be praised or blamed for good or evil; on the other hand I'm not responsible for my thoughts, so I can't have any confidence that my reasoning will lead me to the truth about good and evil. So far it may seem that my argument was merely skeptical, not nihilist. But I reasoned that if the good for man cannot be known to man, then it cannot be offered to man as his good; for all practical purposes, there is no good.

This practical nihilism was linked with a practical atheism, for my arguments were couched in such a way that I thought they applied to God too. He couldn't escape causality either, I thought; therefore he couldn't possess confident knowledge of good and evil any more than I could. And even if he could achieve such a standard, it would make no sense for him to enforce it; trapped in causality like him, human beings have no ultimate control over their conduct. The upshot was that although God might exist, he would be irrelevant. I couldn't quite rule out the existence of God, but I thought I could rule out the existence of a God that mattered.

The holes in the preceding arguments are so large that one can see light through them. One hole is that, in order to deny free will, I assumed that I understood causality. That is foolish because I didn't know what causality really is any more than I understand what free will really is. They are equally wonderful and mysterious, so I had no business pretending to understand one in order to attack the other.

Another problem is that my argument was self-referentially incoherent. If my lack of free will made my reasoning so unreliable that I couldn't find out which ideas about good and evil are true, then by the same token I shouldn't have been able to find out which ideas about free will are true either. But in that case I had no business denying that I had free will in the first place.

At this point two things must be clearly understood. The first: One might think that my arguments for nihilism were what led me to become a nihilist, but that is not true. I was committed to nihilism already, and cooked up the arguments only to rationalise it. The second: One might think that my recognition of the holes in the arguments were what enabled me to escape nihilism, but that is not true either. I saw the holes in my arguments even at the time and covered them over with elaborate nonsense like the need to take an ironic view of reality. Good and evil just had to be meaningless and personal responsibility just had to be nonexistent. The arguments were secondary. I was determined.

My editor – may he forgive me for quoting him – thinks my dismissal of my previous rationalisations as elaborate nonsense seems too pat. Is it really that simple? Well, yes, it really is.

In my present opinion (though not my opinion of 17 years ago), modern ethics is going about matters backwards. It assumes that the problem of human sin is mainly cognitive – that it has to do with the state of our knowledge. In other words, it holds that we really don't know what's right and wrong and that we are trying to find out.

Actually the problem is volitional – it has to do with the state of our will. In other words, by and large we do know the basics of right and wrong but wish we didn't, and we are trying, for one reason or another, to keep ourselves in ignorance.

Is this an ad hominem argument – that because my motive was bad, my nihilism must have been false? No, it is a diagnosis, with myself as case in point. My nihilism was false because it was self-referentially incoherent. (There certainly may exist nihilisms that are false for reasons other than self-referential incoherency, but I am speaking only of the version I held myself.)

The motive was bad because although I knew this to be the case, I embraced the incoherency rather than give up the nihilism. What one must do with such a fellow as I once was is not to tell him what he doesn't know (because he really knows it), but to blow away the smoke-screens by which he hides from the knowledge he has already.

Then how did I become a nihilist? Why was I so determined? What were my real motives?

There were quite a few. One was that, having been caught up in radical politics of the late '60s and early '70s, I had my own ideas about redeeming the world, ideas that were opposed to the Christian faith of my childhood. As I got further and further from God, I also got further and further from common sense about a lot of other things, including moral law and personal responsibility.

That first reason for nihilism led to a second. By now I had committed certain sins of which I did not want to repent. Because the presence of God made me more and more uncomfortable, I began looking for reasons to believe that he didn't exist. It's a funny thing about us human beings: not many of us doubt God's existence and then start sinning. Most of us sin and then start doubting his existence.

A third reason for being a nihilist was simply that nihilism is what I was taught. I may have been raised by Christian parents, but I'd heard all through school that even the most basic ideas about good and evil are different in every society. That's empirically false – as C. S. Lewis remarked, cultures may disagree about whether a man may have one wife or four, but all of them know about marriage; they may disagree about which actions are most courageous, but none of them

rank cowardice as a virtue. But by the time I was taught the false anthropology of the times, I wanted very much to believe it.

A fourth reason, related to the last, was the very way I was taught to use language. My high school English teachers were determined to teach me the difference between what they called facts and what they called opinions, and I noticed that moral propositions were always included among the opinions. My college social science teachers were equally determined to teach me the difference between what they called facts and what they called values, and to much the same effect: the atomic weight of sodium was a fact, but the wrong of murder was not. I thought that to speak in this fashion was to be logical. Of course it had nothing to do with logic; it was merely nihilism itself, in disguise.

A fifth reason for my nihilism was that disbelieving in God was a good way to get back at him for the various things that predictably went wrong in my life after I had lost hold of him. Now of course if God didn't exist then I couldn't get back at him, so this may seem a strange sort of disbelief. But most disbelief is like that.

A sixth reason was that I had come to confuse science with a certain worldview, one that many science writers hold but that actually has nothing to do with science. I mean the view that nothing is real but matter. If nothing is real but matter, then there couldn't be such things as minds, moral law, or God, could there? After all, none of those are matter.

Of course not even the properties of matter are matter, so after a while it became hard to believe in matter itself. But by that time I was so disordered that I couldn't tell how disordered I was. I recognised that I had committed yet another incoherency, but I concluded that reality itself was incoherent, and that I was pretty clever to have figured this out—even more so, because in an incoherent world, figuring didn't make sense either.

A seventh and reinforcing reason for my nihilism was that, for all of the other reasons, I had fallen under the spell of the 19th century German writer Friedrich

Nietzsche. I was, if anything, more Nietzschean than he was. Whereas he thought that given the meaninglessness of things, nothing was left but to laugh or be silent, I recognised that not even laughter or silence were left. One had no reason to do or not do anything at all. This is a terrible thing to believe, but like Nietzsche, I imagined myself one of the few who could believe such things – who could walk the rocky heights where the air is thin and cold.

But the main reason I was a nihilist, the reason that tied all these other reasons together, was sheer, mulish pride. I didn't want God to be God; I wanted J. Budziszewski to be God. I see that now. But I didn't see that then.

I have already noted in passing that everything goes wrong without God. This is true even of the good things he has given us, such as our minds. One of the good things I've been given is a stronger than average mind. I don't make the observation to boast; human beings are given diverse gifts to serve him in diverse ways. The problem is that a strong mind that refuses the call to serve God has its own way of going wrong. When some people flee from God they rob and kill. When others flee from God they do a lot of drugs and have a lot of sex.

When I fled from God I didn't do any of those things; my way of fleeing was to get stupid. Though it always comes as a surprise to intellectuals, there are some forms of stupidity that one must be highly intelligent and educated to achieve. God keeps them in his arsenal to pull down mulish pride, and I discovered them all. That is how I ended up doing a doctoral dissertation to prove that we make up the difference between good and evil and that we aren't responsible for what we do. I remember now that I even taught these things to students. Now that's sin.

It was also agony. You cannot imagine what a person has to do to himself – well, if you are like I was, maybe you can – what a person has to do to himself to go on believing such nonsense. St. Paul said that the knowledge of God's law is "written on our hearts, our consciences also bearing witness". The way natural law thinkers put this is to say that they constitute the deep structure of our minds. That means that so long as we have minds, we can't not know them.

Well, I was unusually determined not to know them; therefore I had to destroy my mind. I resisted the temptation to

Not many of us doubt God's existence and then start sinning. Most of us sin and then start doubting his existence.

believe in good with as much energy as some saints resist the temptation to neglect good. For instance, I loved my wife and children, but I was determined to regard this love as merely a subjective preference with no real and objective value. Think what this did to my very capacity to love them. After all, love is a commitment of the will to the true good

I didn't want God to be God; I wanted J. Budziszewski to be God.

of another person, and how can one's will be committed to the true good of another person if he denies the reality of good, denies the reality of persons, and denies that his commitments are in his control?

Visualise a man opening up the access panels of his mind and pulling out all the components that have God's image stamped on them. The problem is that they all have God's image stamped on them, so the man can never stop. No matter how many he pulls out, there are still more to pull. I was that man. Because I pulled out more and more, there was less and less that I could think about.

But because there was less and less that I could think about, I thought I was becoming more and more focused.

Because I believed things that filled me with dread, I thought I was smarter and braver than the people who didn't believe them. I thought I saw an emptiness at the heart of the universe that was hidden from their foolish eyes. But I was the fool. How then did God bring me back? I came, over time, to feel a greater and greater horror about myself. Not exactly a feeling of guilt, not exactly a feeling of shame, just horror: an overpowering sense that my condition was terribly wrong. Finally it occurred to me to wonder why, if there were no difference between the wonderful and the horrible, I should feel horror.

In letting that thought through, my mental censors blundered. You see, in order to take the sense of horror seriously – and by now I couldn't help doing so – I had to admit that there was a difference between the wonderful and the horrible after all. For once my philosophical training did me some good, because I knew that if there existed a horrible, there had to exist a wonderful of which the horrible was the absence. So my walls of self-deception collapsed all at once. At this point I became aware again of the Saviour whom I had deserted in my 20s. Astonishingly, though I had abandoned him, he had never abandoned me. I now believe he was just in time. There is a point of no return, and I had nearly reached it. I had been pulling

out one component after another, and I had nearly got to the motherboard.

The next few years after my conversion were like being in a dark attic where I had been for a long time, but in which shutter after shutter was being thrown back so that great shafts of light began to stream in and illuminate the dusty corners. I recovered whole memories, whole feelings, whole ways of understanding that I had blocked out.

Of course I had to repudiate my dissertation. At the time I thought my career was over because I couldn't possibly retool, rethink, and get anything written and published before my tenure review came up, but by God's grace that turned out to be untrue.

What I do now as an ethical and political theorist is poles apart from what I did 17 years ago. What I write about now is those very moral principles I used to deny – the ones we can't not know because they are imprinted on our minds, inscribed upon our consciences, written on our hearts.

Some call these principles the "natural law". Such as it is, my own contribution to the theory of natural law is a little different than those of some other writers. One might say that I specialise in understanding the ways that we pretend we don't know what we really do – the ways we suppress our knowledge, the ways we hold it down, the ways we deceive ourselves and others. I do not try to "prove" the natural law as though one could prove that by which all else is proven; I do try to show that in order to get anywhere at all, the philosophies of denial must always at some point assume the very first principles they deny.

It is a matter of awe to me that God has permitted me to make any contribution at all. His promise is that if only the rebel turns to Jesus Christ in repentant faith, giving up claims of self-ownership and allowing this Christ the run of the house, he will redeem everything there is in it. Just so, it was through my rescue from self-deception that I learned about self-deception. He has redeemed even my nihilist past and put it to use.

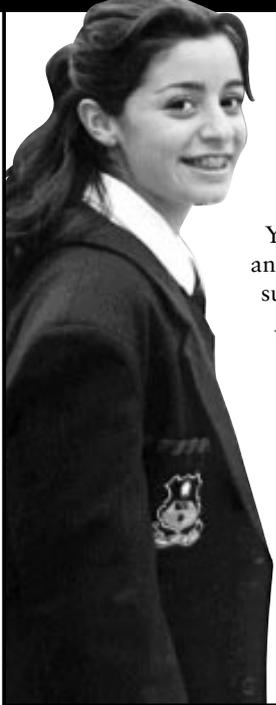
Many of my students tell me they struggle with the same dark influences that I once did. I hope that by telling the story of my own escape I may encourage them to seek the light.

J. Budziszewski can be reached at jbud@austin.rr.com This article is based on a talk delivered to students at the University of Texas at Austin on 23 October 1997. 

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So long

*Could people really have lived to be **that** old?*

As old as Methuselah remains a proverbial simile even in our days of Biblical illiteracy. The expression refers to the patriarch in Genesis 5:25-27 who lived for almost 1000 years, no less.

But he is not the only one: as we survey the chapter we find a range of ages of the same order:

Adam	930 years;
Seth	912 years;
Enosh	905 years;
Kenan	910 years;
Mahalel	895 years;
Jared	962 years;
Enoch	365 years,
	<i>before he was translated;</i>
Methuselah	969 years;
Lamech	777 years;
Noah	600 years
	<i>before the Flood, and 350 years</i>
	<i>after the Flood.</i>

Considering overlaps, this period covers 1656 years from Adam to the Great Deluge, that is, according to our conventional Hebrew text. Two other ancient versions, namely the Samaritan Pentateuch and the Greek Septuagint, give respectively 1307 years, and 2242 years.

However, the latter has Methuselah living for 14 years beyond the Flood, which is out of the question. The Samaritan text has its own problems as well, hence there is good reason for adhering to the traditional text.

Furthermore, barring Enoch, these ages average out at more than 820 years for each patriarch! Clearly, these are far beyond our experience, even for the famous war veteran Jack Lockett of Bendigo, who at 110 is presently one of the oldest men in the world. No-one seriously expects him to attain to anywhere near 900.

Moreover, it is not just the total life-spans, but the age of parenting: 130 years when Adam fathered a son; 105 for Seth; 90 years for Enosh; 187 for Methuselah, for an overall average of 117 years.

What then are we to make of these ages? Many in today's world naturally



Murray Adamthwaite

dismiss them, as just one more evidence that the Bible is full of legends and myths. But not so fast! Like the Flood itself, which figures in native folklore all over the world, traditions of long-lived people before that Great Flood have surfaced among various ancient peoples. Legends of primal longevity exist among the Egyptians, the Phoenicians, the Persians, and even as far afield as China.

Of most interest from the Biblical standpoint, however, is the Sumerian King List, dating to about 1950 B.C. or earlier, and found in several versions from Mesopotamia. All versions have a list of pre-Diluvian kings with prodigiously long reigns, in the tens of thousands of years. A similar list has also come down to us from a Babylonian priest of the third century B.C. named Berossus, in his account of the origins of Babylonian civilization. The best known version, in the cuneiform script, is on the Weld-Blundell prism, which reads as follows:

Alulim	28,800 years
Alagar	36,000 years
Enmenluanna	43,200 years
Enmengalanna	28,800 years
Dumuzi	36,000 years
Ensipazianna	28,800 years
Enmenduranna	21,000 years
Uburtutu	18,600 years
Total	241,200

After the last king the List tells us, "Then the Flood swept over the earth". After the Flood kingship was again lowered from heaven to the city of Kish, then follows a long list of post-Diluvian kings whose reigns range from 1560 years in the post-Flood epoch to much lower, "normal" figures later on. One notable king is Gilgamesh, an ancient Sumerian hero but a confirmed historical figure, who according to the list reigned in Uruk (the Biblical Erech, Gen.10:10) for 126 years. A case can be made for equating him with the Nimrod of Genesis 10:8-10, although at least one scholar has identified Nimrod with Enmerkar, also of Uruk, in the post-Flood period.

Although not the primary focus of this discussion, we must make clear from the outset that the old idea that Genesis 5 and 11 were "borrowed" from the Sumerian

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King List, has been all but abandoned. This shibboleth of the old "Pan-Babylonian" school is yet again nothing more than a simplicitism: the King List is in essence a political tract designed to justify kingship at a city called Isin. It also enumerates a succession of kings and their reign lengths, not a genealogy of mankind with the life-spans of each patriarch. In short, it has an intent very different from Genesis 5, which by contrast traces the

numbering. In this system a Semitic scribe would note 100 as o, but a Sumerian scribe would use the same symbol to denote 3600. Similarly, the number 1000 would be written with a symbol somewhat similar to (, which to the Sumerian scribe would represent 36,000.

Let us suppose that our Sumerian scribe sees a list of names with the total (((0000 at the bottom. What was intended to read as 6700 he (mis)reads according to (((000 his system as 241,200, precisely the total above for the reigns of the pre-Flood kings.

Now the crucial observation is that this is a one-way process. If we propose that the Sumerian List was original, and this total was then read as a decimal number the result would be nonsense (space forbids an explanation); the Semitic decimal representation has to be prior.

It is therefore quite possible that behind both the Sumerian King List and Genesis 5 there was a written genealogical document, later incorporated into our book of Genesis, which Sumerian scribes transformed into a king list. While such a document would date from very early times, this should not surprise us, since the heading is specifically "the written account of Adam's line" (Gen.5:1, NIV).

This observation considers only the totals, but some scholars have attempted to correlate the individual ages in the King List with those of Genesis 5 by a similar manoeuvre, but without agreed results. If we accept this theory regarding the totals, it remains possible that the individual ages have inflated due to a similar type of misreading. However, there is still room for the older explanation, that the Sumerian

list has grossly exaggerated the individual time spans in the interests of boasting the long pedigree of its civilization.

Attempted correlations of names in the list with persons and places in Genesis 2-5 likewise remain speculative. For all that, many of the post-Flood kings in the Sumerian list are known to be part of genuine history. Hence the list seems to reflect real historical memory of these people and events, even if garbled and embellished.

Another observation regarding the Sumerian list is that recent study has confirmed that the pre-Flood section (i.e. the one under discussion) is an import from elsewhere. Hence, while the bulk of the List belongs to the Mesopotamian tradition, the pre-Flood portion belongs to another tradition, ultimately and quite possibly that underlying our Genesis 5.

Likewise, a set of Sumerian epics known as "The Eridu Genesis" highlights a certain similarity to Genesis in a similar Creation-Fall-Flood pattern, but clearly not from "borrowing". As with the King List, it points to a common tradition which the Christian reader may legitimately assert is preserved faithfully in the Biblical text.

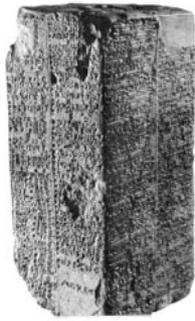
There is still every reason to endorse the comment of D.J. Wiseman in 1969: "... 'king lists' and epic poems combine to convey the oldest Babylonian account of the creation, the fall (?) and the Flood. As with Genesis 1-11 this early history, for such they considered these events, was combined in a single document including poetic narrative of events linked by genealogies and without any specific indication of the time covered by the events described."

The Biblical Ages: Turning from the issue of historical memory, we look at Genesis 5 in particular. Some have attempted to apply the sexagesimal technique described above to reduce the ages of these antediluvians, but unsuccessfully: there is no evidence that such a system applies to a Semitic text like Genesis.

However, an outstanding fact is that while the life spans before the Flood are prodigious, there is a dramatic drop and then a tapering in the post-Flood genealogy of Genesis 11. Hence from Shem's life-span of 500 years to Abraham's of 175 years, or Sarah's of 127 years, there is something of an exponential decline. When we come to Joseph and Joshua, both die at 110, while the kings of Judah have very short lives by modern standards, e.g. Joash dies at 47, Ahaz at 36, Josiah at 39, and Jehoiakim at 36.

Similarly, when we compare this with

Traditions of long-lived people before that Great Flood have surfaced among various ancient peoples.



development of mankind from Adam to Noah, and in particular, the perpetuation of a godly line in a world of growing godlessness and violence. Put another way, there are too many divergences of content and aim to allow for borrowing.

Could they then represent a common tradition from which the King List has diverged? One factor which could well place Genesis 5 as much earlier concerns the actual figures, or at least the totals.

One scholar has proposed that if we total up the ages, the sum comes to 6695 years. When we round this off to 6700 the result is a figure which a Sumerian scribe might well have mistakenly inflated because of his sexagesimal system of

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the King List there is a similar phenomenon: the pre-Flood reigns are staggeringly large, but drop dramatically after the Flood, and continue to decline to familiar lengths around 2000 B.C.

Are such life spans scientifically feasible? The scientists tell us that a cell can only divide a finite number of times – about 50. But was this always so? Moreover, can we compare the conditions in both the human physiology and the environment which prevail now, with those which could well have prevailed in a different world system, early in human history?

Even in our own world longevity is not unknown. I remember well a report in *Time* magazine, about 1966, of an American Negro who died at 136. Even up to his death he could recall life on the plantations, and relate vivid and accurate memories of the Civil War 100 years before. When in 1912 Tsar Nicholas II celebrated the centenary of the Battle of Borodino (when Russian troops stood against Napoleon), the parade featured an aged veteran of 122 who had fought in that battle 100 years before. Also, there were until recently persistent reports from the Hunza Valley in Pakistan of people living to around 150!

To return to Scripture, we should consider questions about the antediluvian world, and its immediate aftermath, in the light of the Hebrew expression “heavens and earth”, the equivalent expression for our word “universe” or ordered world system. Greek has the word *kosmos* (cosmos), from the verb *kosmeo*: “to set in order, make beautiful, adorn” (hence our word “cosmetic”). The *kosmos* therefore is an ordered, harmonious world system, a functioning universe. With this in mind, observe how the apostle Peter asserts that before the Flood there was a “cosmos” or world system different from the “heavens-and-earth” or cosmos which now exists (2 Peter 3:6-7).

While we should not expect scientific information in the modern sense from Scripture, some speculation is unavoidable. If then, a very different cosmos prevailed in those far-off times, with possibly much less mutation-inducing radiation incident on the earth’s surface, and if the human constitution allowed for a much extended capability of cell multiplication, these would explain longer life spans in that age.

Also at this early stage in human history there would have been less pollution, a richer gene pool in contrast to the depleted pool which prevails today, and greater ability of the body for self-regen-

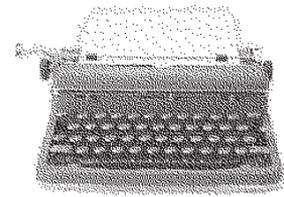
eration. These factors could well have contributed not only to a much slower ageing process, but also to an extended procreative capacity.

Add to this possibility the above observation of the dramatic drop in life-spans after the Flood. Not only the Bible, but studies of so-called cave-men from various European sites likewise indicate an early death for many, e.g. of the Cro-Magnon group. A combination of factors seem to determine this result: a harsher environment after the Flood, poor diet and lack of sunshine in more northerly latitudes in particular (with consequent proneness to rickets), proliferation of disease, plus a greater propensity for mutations.

Regarding the last factor, we should note that under Moses the laws of consanguinity or prohibited degrees are introduced (Lev. 18). In all, the effects of the Curse of Eden can be seen to tighten their grip, while a Divine decree of a shorter life-span seems to be indicated in Psalm 90:10. For all the immense efforts of modern medical science, life expectancy remains at the biblical 70 to 80 years.

Sceptics should therefore hold their dismissive fire when reading these passages. The insistence, “if it doesn’t happen now, then it never could”, betrays a narrow dogmatism, closed to both historical and contemporary evidence. In the words of Shakespeare, “There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamed of in your philosophy!”

Murray Adamthwaite lectures in ancient near-eastern history, and holds a PhD in ancient near-eastern studies from the University of Melbourne. 



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Video Watch

The Family Man

Reviewed by Luke Tattersall



Nicholas Cage in *The Family Man*

Jack Campbell (Nicholas Cage) is a single, wealthy Wall Street trader living the high life in New York City. All that magically changes one morning when he wakes up in a suburban New Jersey bedroom with a wife (Téa Leoni) he never married and two kids he never had – the life he would have led if he had made different choices as a younger man.

So goes the promo for the movie *The Family Man*, recently released on video.

It is a movie that will strike a chord within a lot of people – a movie about the life that could have been. It is a movie about “second thoughts and second chances” – but with a twist. For most people the “life that might have been” is a life of success and wealth. In this movie, Jack Campbell has all that already. A successful Wall Street businessman, Jack is determined, ruthless and in control – he has the flashy New York apartment, the Ferrari, the beautiful women and a job that he loves. Jack is not dissatisfied with his life. Far from it. He couldn’t be happier. But is there something missing?

The movie opens with Jack and Kate (Téa Leoni) at the airport. Jack is heading for a new job in London – his big break. And while he promises to come back to Kate, the lure of money and success proves too much. He abandons any thought of relationship in favour of success.

Life goes on – and Jack makes it big. But a chance encounter gives him a chance to experience what life could have been had he made different choices – life as a family man, as a suburban tyre salesman in New Jersey with a wife and two kids. This is the life he left behind at the airport – life as it would have been if he had married Kate.

At first, Jack has no idea what is happening to him. And initially he is not happy with the alternative life. But as he starts to understand what has happened he also starts to see that this is the life he would choose – if only he had a second chance.

At the heart of this movie are some touching themes. Here is a man who realises that money and success are not the path to happiness and contentment in life. The movie also places a high priority on family. Jack sees that the relationships he has missed out on (wife and children) are more rewarding and fulfilling than being a big-shot in New York.

The plot of *The Family Man* is by no means a new one. This is a very similar story to the famous Frank Capra movie *It’s A Wonderful Life*, or the more recent *Sliding Doors*. Even so, it may be unhelpful to dream about what might have been. As the advertising for the film says: What if... you made different choices, you said yes instead of no, you had a second chance? Ultimately, we don’t have that luxury.

As with most movies nowadays there is a web site you can visit (<http://www.family-man.com>). Not only can you find out about the film, you can also fantasise about what your life could

have been like. There is a chance for you to consider what might have been for you. You answer a few simple questions and they email you an alternative scenario for your life.

It would be tempting to think that Jack has learned a valuable lesson – that family is more important than money. The movie also gives the impression that satisfaction in life is to do with making the right choices. But meaning, contentment and satisfaction in life won’t be found in your work *or* in your family. It will be found in knowing God through Jesus. And contentment is found in knowing that whatever situation you are in you can live to serve Jesus.

The Family Man is a movie that will appeal to the mid-life crisis in all of us. But we ought to resist the temptation to



***The Family Man* is a movie that will appeal to the mid-life crisis in all of us.**

dream about “what might have been”. We can be thankful for the situation God has placed us in. We ought to be thankful that through Jesus we know what this life is about. And at the same time, as Christians we should seek to be wise enough to count the cost of our life decisions in advance – as the old builder says, “measure twice, cut once.”

The Family Man is rated MA 15+.

Luke Tattersall is the pastor of Parramatta City Presbyterian Church. 

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Fear and hate

In times like this, as in all other times, Christians have a responsibility to love above all else.

Attacks on the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and Pennsylvania have provoked a variety of emotions for Christians in the US and around the world. Certainly the dominant feelings American Christians are feeling now are fear and anger. What is a Christian response to these feelings? Here are a few thoughts from the *Christianity Today* archives.

In an editorial on 16 September 1991, *Christianity Today* wrote that fear has its place — but it must not be controlling.

Fear was designed by God to give our bodies the sudden bursts of strength and speed we need in emergencies. But when fear becomes a permanent condition, it can paralyse the spirit, keeping us from taking the risks of generosity, love, and vulnerability that characterise citizens of God's kingdom. ...

But, as it is said, just because you're paranoid does not mean they're not after you. The real question is whether, in the face of a challenge, the Christian reaction should be fear or something else. As the Bible says, "For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship" (Rom. 8:15).

That verse occurs in the context of one of the most confidence-building chapters in the Bible. And the confidence it builds is confidence, not in ourselves, but in God. The reasons Paul gives are capsulised in words that outline the nature of our relationship with God. We are "sons"; we are "loved"; we are "led by the Spirit"; we are "predestined"; we are "elect"; we are "called according to his purpose". And in all this we are "more than conquerors".

The message of Romans 8 encourages neither "positive thinking" nor flight



In the hours after the catastrophe of 11 September, Christianity Today posted on its website excerpts from two previous editorials.

from reality. It lists graphically the challenges and obstacles we face: tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, and sword. But it finds confidence in a greater reality, the overwhelming love of God.

On 22 October 1990, *Christianity Today* editorialised on growing racism and hatred following Iraq's invasion of



Christianity has been a part of Middle Eastern culture since its beginning.

Kuwait. As we post this article, it is unknown who is behind today's attacks. But it is certain that many Americans are already blaming radical Muslim and Arab groups — and hatred seems to be a common theme on today's call-in programs:

When international disputes escalate to this extent, the church has a special responsibility to douse the flames of hatred here at home.

First of all, the church must apply its teaching that we all stand as individuals before God to the context of war and racism. The prophets Ezekiel (chap. 18) and Jeremiah (31:29-34) liberated their readers from the idea that spiritual standing before God was tied to family, clan, or race. The apostle Peter was also taught of the Holy Spirit that nationality makes no difference to God (Acts 10:34-35, 47; 11:15-18).

In wartime particularly, understanding

the spiritual significance of the individual is important, for we tend to tar members of an enemy race with a milewide brush. Readers who have lived long enough will remember posters portraying the German "Hun" as a fearsome, subhuman menace. Such characterisation is the standard way to run a war, but a terrible way to work for peace.

The way to overcome hostility is to get to know individuals, and the church could help us do this. Through multi-ethnic fellowship we will learn that many who have family ties to our country's adversaries are loyal Americans. Arab-Americans may love their mothers' tabouleh, but most are as distressed as the rest of us by Hussein's hostilities.

Second, the church must be a channel of cultural and geographical information, even when the public schools are not. Because of their missions resources, many churches already have regular opportunities to put a human face on those who live in other cultures.

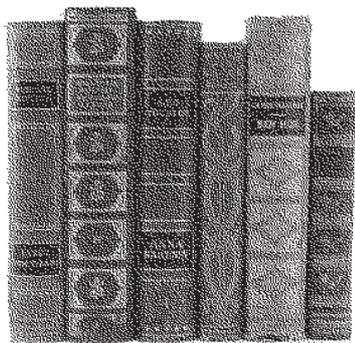
In the case of the Arab world specifically, the church can teach that Christianity has been a part of Middle Eastern culture since its beginning. (Why do we act as if Christianity started in America's Middle West rather than the planet's Middle East?) And that to this day there are strong, indigenous Christian communities there. Not all Arabs are Muslims. Not all Muslims are radical followers of crazed ayatollahs. (And, by the way, most Iranians are not Arabs.)

A little information like this would go a long way toward preventing hostility and promoting understanding in our own home towns.

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books



Darwin on Trial

Phillip E. Johnson

Washington: Regnery Gateway, 1991

Reviewed by Peter Barnes

The Scopes trial of 1925 was portrayed in the play and the movie *Inherit the Wind* as a battle between reason and superstition. It was, in fact, nothing of the kind. It was the evolutionists who pointed to such evidence as Piltdown Man (who turned out to be a rather clumsy hoax) and Nebraska Man (who turned out to be the tooth of an extinct pig).

Such embarrassments have not led to an outbreak of humility and critical thinking on the part of the evolutionary establishment. It is not commonly recognised that Darwin's theory of natural selection has the scientific, but not the literary, worth of Kipling's *Just-So Stories*.

Darwin wrote: "Natural selection can act only by the preservation and accumulation of infinitesimally small inherited modification, each profitable to the preserved being." So eyes and wings – which are only useful if they actually work from day one – supposedly evolved over millions of years.

Medieval alchemists tried to transform lead into gold, and we laugh at them, but evolutionists are essentially selling the same kind of product. We are solemnly told that the coelacanth became extinct 70 million years ago, then in 1938 one is caught in the Indian Ocean – looking remarkably like it supposedly did 70 million years ago!

The problems inherent in the evolutionary hypothesis as an explanation of the beginnings of life are so great that it is no wonder Francis Crick suggested that bacteria were sent in a spaceship.

Phillip Johnson argues that Darwinism needs to be exposed to Popper's possible falsification. So far not too many

Darwinists have been willing to do that, but the ramshackle old theory is surely crumbling, and Phillip Johnson is the ideal person to point out some gaping cracks in the walls. The result is a cogent and razor-sharp demolition of Darwinist dogma, and is highly recommended.

Peter Barnes, minister of Revesby Presbyterian Church, is AP's books editor.

Presbyterian Ministers in Australia 1822-1901

Rowland S. Ward and Malcolm D. Prentis

Melbourne: New Melbourne Press, 2001

Reviewed by Peter Davidson

This book will prove to be a most valuable tool – to the historian and browser alike. The historian will find it essential for historical reference. The curious browser will gain no less in understanding those who pioneered and built Australian Presbyterianism, of all complexions, in the 18th century.

The book lists more than 1100 ministers and agents who served the various Presbyterian groups in the colonies until the establishment of the Presbyterian Church of Australia. It goes from Archibald McArthur in Hobart in 1822 and John Dunmore Lang in Sydney the following year to J. H. Hewitt's ordination which happened the same afternoon as the constituting of the GAA on 24 July 1901.

There is an enormous amount of biographical data listed: parentage, marriage and children, early life, places of study, church of origin, dates and locations of licensing and ordination, places served, later life, publications and interesting data wherever any of these are known. Sometimes it is a warts and all entry!

One could dip into many interesting entries. One early Prime Minister (and Premier of NSW) had a father and brother as ministers. The PM was renowned for his vacillation on any issue. Read the entries on his ministerial family members and discover it was a family trait!

As important as the entries are the four insightful essays that preface the book. They discuss how our early ministry came together – the conditions and the myriad of denominational sources, by no means all Presbyterian, and over a third being other than Scottish. Many were men who could not find parishes back home because of the surplus of ministers. Some had brief pastorates – yet many served

long and hard for the Gospel under appalling and isolated conditions.

Some readers will think there is a Free Kirk bias. The facts are there were nearly twice as many ministers from there than from the Established Church of Scotland, and almost as many from smaller Scottish Presbyterian denominations as from the Established Church.

By two well-known historians, the book was released concurrent with the centenary GAA. The appearance of the work will probably draw much additional information from local histories for a hoped-for second edition.

No doubt the publication deadline and the need to keep the editorial costs down was the cause of several typographical errors and a few errors of expression, but this is a small price to pay for an invaluable resource – which the church has needed for a long time, and will value for many years to come.

Peter Davidson is a minister emeritus.

Responding to the Culture of Death

John R. Ling

Surrey: Day One Publications, 2001

Reviewed by Peter Barnes

What used to be known as Christendom has embraced the culture of death in recent times, as practices such as abortion, euthanasia, infanticide, and experimentation on human embryos have become widely accepted as legal and moral. Dr John Ling argues for the Christian position, which he characterises as one of principled compassion.

The humanistic and utilitarian arguments that have been used to justify abortion and the like are exposed for what they are – irrational and pitiless. The 1984 Warnock Report is one such example. It is often cited as an authority but is based on no consistent ethical system. It accepts so much about the culture of death, then suddenly becomes moralistic about surrogacy.

Dr Ling gives us good reasons for not trusting humanistic doctors and ethics committees. Instead, we need to turn to the Scriptures, and be well-informed about what is going on.

Dr Ling is not naive, but he is sure that the situation can be changed; there are real signs of hope. The pendulum may well be swinging in a pro-life direction. In any case, to choose God is to choose life (Deut.30:19-20).

A time to weep

The Christian, like the Bible, is no stranger to tears.

Anybody who has ever tried to memorise Scripture knows that the shortest verse in the Bible is John 11:35, “Jesus wept”. Since the sinless Son of God wept, it is clear that weeping is not wrong in itself, but it is one of the indicators of the fallen nature of this world. The world being what it is, there is a time to weep as well as a time to laugh (Eccles. 3:4).

The tragedies of this world can cause us to weep. David, for example, broke down and wept when his rebellious son Absalom was killed: “O my son Absalom – my son, my son Absalom – if only I had died in your place” (2 Sam. 18:33; see too Mt. 2:18; Luke 7:13; 8:52). Nehemiah wept when the wall of Jerusalem was broken down and its gates burned with fire (Neh. 1:4).

Such is to be the Christian’s sympathy with those who suffer that he or she is to “weep with those who weep” (Rom. 12:15). The great apostle was apparently not influenced by the Stoic belief that “manly men do not cry”.

Weeping is also associated with sorrow over sin (e.g. Jer. 31:9). Repentance includes grief over sin, and a hatred of it, and this may lead to weeping. The woman who was a sinner wept in Jesus’ presence and washed his feet with her tears because she was overcome with love for him and sorrow at her sin (Luke 7:38). In his *Confessions* Augustine often weeps as he remembers his sins, and his continued struggle with sin.

The sins of others should also grieve any who care for the souls of others. In contemplating the fallenness of the world and the horror of its sin, Christ wept over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41-44). He could have wept for what he would go through – the false accusations, the mocking, the scourging, the nails through the hands and feet, the thirst, the spear in the side, and being forsaken by the Father. One



Peter Barnes

might think that there was some scope for justifiable self-pity. But Christ did not weep for himself but for Jerusalem which was bringing judgment upon itself.

Jeremiah too could be moved to tears (Jer. 9:1), while the apostle Paul was no stranger to weeping. He wept and prayed for his fellow Israelites (Rom. 9:1-3; 10:1). At Ephesus he had tears in his eyes as he warned sinners of their state (Acts 20:31; see too Phil. 3:18). To correct erring Christians caused him great anguish of heart because of his love for them. When people sinned, it tore Paul apart to have to correct them (2 Cor. 2:4).

George Whitefield was both a Calvinist and an evangelist – in fact, England’s greatest ever evangelist. It was not unknown for him to weep as he preached or prayed for the salvation of sinners. Andrew Bonar once told Robert Murray M’Cheyne that he had preached the previous Lord’s Day on “The wicked shall be turned into hell”, and on hearing

that, M’Cheyne asked Bonar: “Were you able to preach it with tenderness?” We are to preach hard things, but not in a hard way.

We are assured that God is not indifferent to the tears of his children. In the wilderness David prayed: “You number my wanderings; put my tears into your bottle; are they not in your book?” (Ps. 56:8). Hence, for the Christian, there is the promise that “weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning” (Ps. 30:5).

On this earth, a Christian may weep over life’s tragedies and disasters, and over his own sins and the sins of others. The Fall has ravaged us all, and, despite the real joys of this life, there is nevertheless much labour and sorrow. In hell, however, there is only weeping and gnashing of teeth (Mt. 8:12; 13:42, 50; 25:30). Under the unrelieved justice of God, there will be only the miseries of earth multiplied, with no compensating joys. People will weep for sin, but in regret, not in repentance. These are tears which flow as the truth is understood, too late.

In heaven, as a contrast, God will wipe away every tear from the eyes of his people (Rev. 7:17). In the beautiful words of Revelation 21:4, where God speaks of those who are members of the new heaven and the new earth: “And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.”

There is nothing to mar the joy of heaven, so weeping is out of place. Sin had been dealt with, and all its terrible consequences are no more. The people of God shall indeed glorify him and enjoy him forever.

Peter Barnes is minister of Revesby Presbyterian Church, Sydney. 



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